

The Best Poems
of
1926

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THE BEST POEMS OF 1926

THE BEST POEMS OF 1926

EDITED BY

L. A. G. STRONG

Editor of "The Best Poems of 1923,"
"The Best Poems of 1924," "The
Best Poems of 1925"



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The Editor of the *Century Magazine*,

The Editor of the *Chapbook*,

The Editor of the *Cherwell*,

The Editor of *Commonweal*,

The Editor of the *Fugitive*,

The Editor of the *Guardian*,

The Editor of *Harpers' Magazine*,

The Editor of the *Irish Statesman*,

The Editor of the *London Mercury*,

The Editor of the *Lyric*,

The Editor of the *Midland*,

- The Editor of the *Minaret*,
 The Editor of the *Nation and Athenæum*,
 The Editor of the *Nation* (New York),
 The Editor of the *New Leader*,
 The Editor of the *New Republic*,
 The Editor of the *North American Review*,
 The Editor of *Palms*,
 The Editor of *Poetry*,
 The Editor of the *San Francisco Review*,
 The Editor of the *Saturday Review* (London),
 The Editor of *Scribner's Magazine*,
 The Editor of the *Spectator*,
 The Editor of the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*,
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INTRODUCTION

A valued contributor wrote not long ago, taking me to task for including a certain poem in last year's volume. He quoted lines of it which he maintained were the flattest prose, and challenged me to justify its presence in a book of verse. I replied that, to determine what was a "poem," the editor's decision was final—meaning not my own decision, but the editor's of the magazine in which the poem appeared. Anything a magazine-editor consented to publish as verse was potential grist for the anthology: it remained only for me to decide how "good" it was. And I could justify the poem complained of on grounds other than rhythmical.

Still, this was a flippant and unsatisfactory answer; and his letter set me thinking once more upon the difficult question of distinguishing technically between poetry and prose—of deciding where to recognize the boundary line between them.

The extreme of prose, I imagine, is found in mathematics. Let a be an adjective and b a noun; any combination of their meanings is precise and calculable. a times b will always be ab , neither

more nor less: a statement innocent of overtone and innuendo.

Still, this is hardly language, as we understand the term. Once language is reached, the technical vocabulary of a set science is perhaps the nearest to this mathematical precision, for the scientist limits the meanings of his professional words as narrowly as he can. Thus "hypodermic syringe," "aneroid barometer," produce definite and limited reactions in the reader's mind: yet, in so far as they have a human connotation, they tend to have other ideas associated with them, and to suggest quickly a host of shadowy impressions outside our awareness of their precise physical meaning. The syringe may suggest a morphia-maniac, or pain, or any experience in the mind of the individual reader with which it is by chance associated: so may the barometer; while, to come only a little further afield, "locomotor ataxy" may be read as an indictment of our social system, instead of being merely the name for an aggravated disorder of the nerves.

Thus the mind, with its inherent vagabondage, refuses to be bound even to the most precise significances of which language is capable. (Can we be surprised, incidentally, at the furious controversies which form the history of philosophy and religion? Controversies wherein each word, charged with the profoundest emotional associations, doubles its power to offend by claiming scientific

finality. No wonder limited terminologies fare so ill when they seek to account for religion—or poetry. For the precise adjective delights our reason, but our emotions need other food.

Let us carry on for a moment our illustration of noun and adjective, drawing this time upon the vocabulary of every day, and see how far the associative power of common words outweighs their precise meaning. Suppose we take “night” for our noun. Already, before we have chosen an adjective at all, a host of different associations have been raised: the man who writes “night” can never be sure offhand how his reader will receive it. Quite apart from any past experience it may recall—which we can term its associative meaning—it will have a different primary meaning for different individuals. To invalid, to lover, and to policeman, it will mean something different, at the first moment they become aware of it. Let us next apply an adjective: “terrible night” or “silent night.” We have now limited its primary meaning, for the reader is driven back to contemplate the unpleasant or peaceful nights he has spent, instead of having all his nights to draw upon. But this limitation of primary meaning makes for greater intensity of associative meaning: the mind explores in greater detail the particular episode, real or imaginary, which noun and adjective invite it to recall. An unexpected combination of noun and epithet may

set the mind wandering, in mid sentence, for minutes at a time.

So much, then, for two words: what of a sentence, or a paragraph? This putting together of words, we perceive, is a difficult business: we can never be sure what haeres we will start in the reader's mind. Around each word is a cloud of shadowy associations; are the supreme writers those who handle these clouds with the greatest surety, whose words are magic, to invoke by wordy formula the greatest significance of shadows in the greatest number of receptive minds? For the printer's ink is in itself as meaningless as the mumbo-jumbo of the incantation; but its magic is surer, and it can raise the mightiest spirits that have power on earth.

Moreover, this handling of the mind's subtlest stuff is strong man's work, definite and hard as the hammering of wrought iron, or the marble which mallet and chisel labour to make smooth. A spiritual power, it proceeds from control of the material and objective. The man who by self-discipline and training has won a giant's strength will never use it tyrannously like a giant. Shakespeare's most magical effects, the lines which awe the spirits of the best in succeeding generations, are the fruit of an almost terrible objective power: a heaven-born, earth-disciplined awareness of the definite symbols which would most surely summon up for others the mighty clouds of emotion which were filling his sky.

Such communication at the highest cannot be deliberate: the poet is far beyond that sort of self-consciousness; perhaps he deliberately forges his weapons in the intervals between inspiration, that he may be the better fitted for it when it comes, and prepares, in the sublime arrogance of genius, to record the message that comes to him and not to other men.

If, then, we claim this associative power, this more or less definite ability to call up the clouds of emotional meanings to the reader's mind, as the distinguishing mark of good literature, and measure a writer's greatness by the fidelity and consistence with which he does this: we are still but little nearer a distinction between poetry and prose, for both may possess this power of invocation.

We must now look for other qualities, and note that in the history of literature the language of highest exaltation has usually been dependent upon rhythm of some kind: either upon a regular beat, or the repetition of a phrase, or upon some other device, the aim of which has been to please the ear by rousing in it certain expectations, with reference to which the writing proceeds; satisfying them exactly, or else by some variant which depends for its effect upon being recognized in relation to them. These expectations may be clearly defined and limited, as in the case of work written in a fixed metre with regularly rhyming lines, in which the

opportunity for variation is small: or—as in certain passages of the Old Testament, and in much modern verse—the writer may have claimed such scope that his return to the original theme serves as a reminder rather than as a fulfilment.

To come down to particulars, however, the task in compiling this anthology is not really to determine whether each piece of work is "Poetry" in the abstract (for, as I said, the magazine editors take that important decision upon them); but to decide, upon premises far less definite, whether this or that piece of work is "better," i. e. fitter for inclusion, than this or that totally dissimilar piece of work. Is a free-verse description of a street accident "better" than a sonnet about betrothal, or a blank-verse dream of Hy Brasil? Is—and this is a really hard question—a sincere and technically flawless poem in an unexacting metre "better" than an equally sincere poem in a difficult metre, the very difficulty of which has brought about a flaw in technique? If the second poet had avoided his flaw, he would have brought off a bigger thing than the first: *not* because a difficult metre has any inherent virtue, nor even because his conflict would have been sharper and his victory therefore the greater; but because it needs more faith and vision and strength and experience of life to make a recognized pattern express one's emotions perfectly, than to achieve a statement of them in conflict with

nothing but the difficulty of expressing verbally any equivalent to them at all. And, finally, because the recognized pattern has generally the greater power of invocation, the greater magic, the greater power to summon those clouds of which we spoke a short while back. Still—can one include, in a book of so-called “best” poems, a poem with a glaring technical flaw?

But enough of editorial worries. There, each year, is the mass of verse. Even the list of periodicals drawn on, in the book and tiny appendix, will be seen to be pretty large; and there are many more read than are mentioned. Out of this multitude the editor has to select the hundred or so which in his judgment best represent it, and stand the racket of his choice; the former he does with pain and care, the latter with extreme cheerfulness.

There is one point, often raised, but more often last year than before, which I would like to answer. Many reviewers find nothing to blame in the book but its title, which is not of my personal choice. It is of course obvious that if the word “best” be taken strictly, then only a very few poets would be represented. A might have written twenty poems in the year, nineteen of them better than any of X’s or Y’s or Z’s. Therefore the aim of the book is to be the “best” survey, *as a whole*, of the year’s verse, representing in the “best” way the activities of the poets and the tendencies of their work. It

is a sort of *précis*, or summary, of the year's output; and if the reader finds it hard to believe that individual pieces included are "the best," let me assure him that, at any rate, they are not the worst.

Mr. Shaemas O'Sheel, in a delightful letter and a very able review, protested against the indiscriminate use of the word "poem." Verse is written in shoals, but the poem is rare; and as I read his words, I remembered Ralph Hodgson's: "A poem is what a good poet writes every now and then by the grace of God." I agree with Mr. O'Sheel, as perhaps I need hardly have told him; but for the majority of readers, who use the word "poet" as generously as they use "poem," the distinction would have little value; and to label the book "verse" might only make them suppose it confessedly inferior to others keeping to the usual term.

Will the kind authors and editors who send me material each year please continue to send it? And will those who hitherto have neglected to do so, if they wish their work included, please take this means of ensuring that I see it? I am especially anxious to receive copies of local magazines and magazines of verse which, unless they are sent me, I am unlikely to come upon.

One thing more: will those who send me material forgive a long delay in its acknowledgment? I file all verse till the time comes to prepare the forthcoming issue, and endeavour to answer all cor-

respondents afterwards; since, if one is engaged upon original work oneself, and that in the intervals of a quite different occupation, it would be disturbing to be continually busied upon critical selection. Moreover, one cannot attempt a comparative estimate until the whole field of work is available; so that I may not in October decide whether a poem will or will not be eligible for inclusion the May following.

As ever, I am most grateful to poets and editors for the help they have so generously given, and appeal confidently for its continuance. I am encouraged to believe that the book grows better each year, and I hope that the friendliness and co-operation which have made this possible hitherto will not be withheld in the year to come.

L. A. G. S.

Summer Fields,
Oxford,
England.

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THE BEST POEMS OF 1926

THE BEST POEMS OF 1926

TRANSFORMATION

To set that soaring joy
Lone in high air,
What heavens were robbed of delight
By their Emperor!

He casts the angelic lights
Into the clay
Where immortality
Lasts but a day.
In the field of time
The King has His play.

He steals from His treasures
The starry and pure
To light a passion
That may not endure.

The astral lights
In earth grow dim,
And fade in the darkness
Denying Him:
They die in the darkness,
Lost seraphim!

He would not know
That He was the god
Were His hands not holding
Sceptre or rod.

A. E.

SEA HOLLY

BEGOTTEN by the meeting of rock with rock,
The mating of rock and rock, rocks gnashing
together;
Created so, and yet forgetful, walks
The seaward path, puts up her left hand, shades
Blue eyes, the eyes of rock, to see better
In slanting light the ancient sheep (which kneels
Biting the grass) the while her other hand,
Hooking the wicker handle, turns the basket
Of eggs. The sea is high today. The eggs
Are cheaper. The sea is blown from the southwest
Confused, taking up sand and mud in waves,
The waves break, sluggish, in brown foam, the wind
Disperses (on the sheep and hawthorn) spray—
And on her cheeks, the cheeks engendered of rock,
And eyes, the color of rock. The left hand
Falls from the eyes, and undecided slides
Over the left breast on which muslin lightly
Rests, touching the nipple, and then down
The hollow side, virgin as rock, and bitterly
Caresses the blue hip.

It was for this,
This obtuse taking of the seaward path,
This stupid hearing of larks, this hooking
Of wicker, this absent observation of sheep
Kneeling in harsh sea-grass, the cool hand shading
The spray-stung eyes—it was for this the rock

Smote itself. The sea is higher today,
And eggs are cheaper. The eyes of rock take in
The seaward path that winds toward the sea,
The thistle-prodder, old woman under a bonnet,
Forking the thistles, her back against the sea,
Pausing, with hard hands on the handle, peering
With rock eyes from her bonnet.

It was for this,
This rock-lipped facing of brown waves, half sand
And half water, this tentative hand that slides
Over the breast of rock, and into the hollow
Soft side of muslin rock, and then fiercely
Almost as rock against the hip of rock—
It was for this in midnight the rocks met,
And dithered together, cracking and smoking.

It was for this,
Barren beauty, barrenness of rock that aches
On the seaward path, seeing the fruitful sea,
Hearing the lark of rock that sings, smelling
The rock-flower of hawthorn, sweetness of rock—
It was for this, stone pain in the stony heart,
The rock loved and labored; and all is lost.

CONRAD AIKEN.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST IN DEATH

MAGNIFICENTLY quiet he lies as if
The vast repose in all his work were caught
Now in these features. Marble was not stiff
That his hands fashioned and here death has
wrought
The same swift grace. O bold epitome
Of the high, lonely labor of the master.
Presumptuous death—but immortality
Resides not here—pitiably fast and faster
This work will fade—this replica of dust
Tomorrow, tomorrow will be terribly gone—
Death's feeble art that could not stand one thrust
Of time, but time will trouble not the stone
He graved. Consummate this—but fugitive—
The hand is still that could have made it live.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING.

SONG

NOTHING I have is worth a tear
Books and papers, gauds and gear.
Happier beetle spread on his back
Than I boxed up with this what d'ye-lack.

What makes man as he stands?

Head, belly and hands:

Three to serve one, and the world goes on.

Once I'd a heart, but they did not approve it,
Slit up my side, and let them remove it,
Since I've been good they have given to me
Paper galore, and much good may it do me.

What brings man relief?

Bread, pudding and beef.

Three kinds of food: paper's no good.

Soldiers tell me fighting's no frolic,
Wise men tell me love is a colic,
Bishops tell me learning's a lie—
Somebody tells me that I must die.

What shall serve man then?

Sword, sonnet or pen?

All things must fall: God help us all!

E. N. DA C. ANDRADE.

THE NAIAD

FROST-BOUND the garden stands.
The claws of the frost are sharp upon my hands.
On the harsh lawn each blade of grass
Is tempered to a brittle spear of glass.
The fountain is crystal-hung: its waters fail.

Wilted to colourless, frail
Paper the tender flesh of the flowers.

The Dryads are gone from the tree,
For the leaves are gone, the delicate leafy towers
Dismantled, bared to the iron anatomy
Not even a bird could hide in. But hid within
In the hollow trunk, the knees drawn up to the chin,
Hugging herself each shivering Dryad sleeps,

And frozen Echo leaps
From her dream when my footfalls knock
In a motionless, soundless world,
On a pathway hard as rock.

No flutter, no song of bird

Nor bubbling flute is heard,

Nor laughter of green-eyed Satyr. The Satyr,
curled

In his ice-hung cave, is shaken with torpid fear;

For the days of lust are over

And cold are the loved and the lover

And the birthday of Christ draws near.

Smooth flows the stream, its shallow bank ice-coated,

And the pool where the lilies floated

Is glazed with a polished pane as black as flint

And fringed with a delicate wreath
Of crystal leaves. But a hint
Of water moving beneath
Draws my eyes. Pale, pale through the polished
glass,
Sweet naked body and wavering hair pass
Pallid as death, fluid as water.
O ghost of Arethusa, Spring's first daughter,
Beating vain hands against your crystal ceiling!
O hands imploring, O white lips appealing,
Stirred and parted by syllables unheard!
See, with a sharp-edged stone I crack the pane.
The pale lips part again
And the leafless garden thrills to the delicate ring
Of a small, clear call from Naiad or hidden bird,
From water or air, crying "The Spring! The
Spring!"

MARTIN ARMSTRONG.

PORTRAIT

THE lips so apt for deeds of passion
The hair to stifle a man's breath
The symmetry of form beneath
An Irish mackintosh, the wild
Defiant pupils of a child.
The gods responsible for these
Whatever else to blame one sees
 Were artists in their fashion.

But left the signature unwritten
Too early tired; 'twas strange to botch
A masterpiece, but we who watch
Horizons to redress the wrong
See only Götterdämmerung.
Not one of us, except in dreams,
Can alter by a word it seems
 The story that is written,

Which has no happy marriage-ending.
A story, which we know, will fail
To turn romantic fairy tale,
For neither friendliness nor tears
Have hands to push away the years,
We can but turn our eyes away
Before the last act of the play
 And its unlovely ending.

W. H. AUDEN.

STEEL

I

THIS man is dead.
Everything you can say
Is now quite definitely said:
This man held up his head
And had his day,
Then turned his head a little to one way
And slept instead.

Young horses give up their pride:
You break them in
By brief metallic discipline
And something else beside. . . .
So this man died.

While he lived I did not know
This man; I never heard
His name. Now that he lies as though
He were remembering some word
He had forgotten yesterday or so,
It seems a bit absurd
That his blank lids and matted hair should grow
Suddenly familiar. . . . Let him be interred.

Steady now. . . . That was his wife
Making that small queer inarticulate sound
Like a knife;
Steady there. . . . Let him slip easy into the
ground;

Do not look at her,
She is fighting for breath. . . .
She is a foreigner. . . .
Polak . . . like him . . . she cannot under-
stand. . . .
It is hard. . . . Leave her alone with death
And a shovelful of sand.

“O the pity of it, the pity of it, Iago!” . . .
Christ, what a hell
Is packed into that line! Each syllable
Bleeds when you say it. . . . No matter: Chicago
Is a far cry from Cracow;
And anyhow
What have Poles
To do with such extraneous things as hearts and
souls?

There is nothing here to beat the breast over,
Nothing to relish the curious,
Not a smell of the romantic; this fellow
Was hardly your yearning lover
Frustrated; no punchinello;
But just a hunky in a steel mill. Why then fuss
Because his heavy Slavic face went yellow
With the roaring furnace dust? Now that he is in
The cool sweet crush of dirt, to hell with your
sobbing violin,
Your sanctimonious 'cello!
Let the mill bellow!

If you have ever had to do with steel:
 The open-hearth, the blooming-mill, the cranes
 Howling under a fifty-ton load, trains
 Yowling in the black pits where you reel
 Groggily across a sluice of orange fire, a sheet
 Tongued from the conduits that bubble blue green;
 if

Ever you have got a single whiff
 Out of the Bessemer's belly, felt the drag
 And drip and curdle of steel spit hissing against
 hot slag;

If ever you have had to eat
 One hundred and thirty degrees of solid heat,
 Then screwed the hose to the spigot, drowned in
 steam,

Darted back when the rods kicked up a stream
 Of fluid steel and had to duck the ladle that slob-
 bered over, and scream

Your throat raw to get your *Goddam!* through—
 Then I am talking to you.

Steve did that for ten years with quiet eyes,
 And body down to the belt caked wet
 With hardening cinder splash and stiffening sweat
 And whatever else there is that clots and never
 utterly dries.

He packed the mud and dolomite, made back-wall,

main

Herded the heat, and placed his throw in tall
Terrible arcs behind smoked glasses, and watched it
fall

Heavy and straight and true,
While the blower kept the gas at a growl and the
brew

Yelled red and the melter hollered "Heow!" and
you raveled

Her out and the thick soup gargled and you traveled
Like the devil to get out from under. . . . Well,
Steve

For ten years of abdominal heft and heave
Worked steel. So much for that. And after
Ten years of night shifts, fourteen hours each,
The Bessemers burn your nerves up, bleach
Rebellion out of your bones; and laughter
Sucked clean out of your guts becomes
More dead than yesterday's feet moving to yester-
day's drums. . . .

And so they called him "Dummy." The whole
gang

From pit boss down to the last mud-slinger cursed
And squirted tobacco juice in a hot and mixed
harangue

Of Slovene, Serb, Dutch, Dago, Russian, and—
worst—

English as hard and toothless as a skull.

And Steve stared straight ahead of him and his
eyes were dull.

Anna was Steve's little woman
Who labored bitterly enough,
Making children of stern and tragic stuff
And a rapture that was hammered rough,
Spilling steel into their spines, yet keeping them
wistful and human. . . .

Anna had her work to do
With cooking and cleaning
And washing the window curtains white as new,
Washing them till they wore through:
For her the white curtains had a meaning—
And starching them white against the savage will
Of the grim dust belching incessantly out of the
mill;

Soaking and scrubbing and ironing against that
gritty reek

Until her head swam and her knees went weak
And she could hardly speak.

A terrible unbeaten purpose persisted:

Color crying against a colorless world!

White against black at the windows flung up, unfurled!

Candles and candle light!

The flags of a lonely little woman twisted

Out of her hunger for cool clean beauty, her hunger for white!—

These were her banners and this was her fight!

No matter how tired she was, however she would
ache

In every nerve, she must boil the meat and bake
The bread, and the curtains must go up white—for
Steve's sake!

One thing was certain:

That John and Stanley and Helen and Mary and the
baby Steven

Must be kept out of the mills and the mill life, even
If it meant that her man and she would break
Under the brunt of it: she had talked it through
with him

A hundred times. . . . Let her eyeballs split, her
head swim—

The window must have its curtain!

III

Lately Steve had stopped talking altogether
When he slumped in with his dinner pail and
heavily

Hunched over his food.

So Anna and the children let him be;

She was afraid to ask him why or whether

As he sat with his eyes glued

On vacancy.

So Anna and the children let him brood.

Only sometimes he would suddenly look at them
and her

In a ghastly fixed blur

Till a vast nausea of terror and compassion stood
Blundering in her heart and swarming in her
blood—

And she shivered and knew somehow that it was
not good.

And then it happened: Spring had come
Like the silver needle-note of a fife,
Like a white plume and a green lance and a glitter-
ing knife
And a jubilant drum.
But Steve did not hear the earth hum:
Under the earth he could feel merely the fever
And the shock of roots of steel forever;
April had no business with the pit
Or the people—call them people—who breathed
in it.
The mill was Steve's huge harlot and his head
Lay between breasts of steel on a steel bed,
Locked in a steel sleep and his hands were riveted.

IV

And then it happened: nobody could tell whose
Fault it was, but a torrent of steel broke loose,
Trapped twenty men in the hot frothy mess. . . .
After a week, more or less,
The company, with appropriate finesse,
Having allowed the families time to move,
Expressed a swift proprietary love
By shoving the dump of metal and flesh and shoes
And cotton and cloth and felt
Back in the furnace to remelt.

And that was all, though a dispatch so neat,
So wholly admirable, so totally sweet,
Could not but stick in Steve's dulled brain.
And whether it was the stink or the noise or just
plain

Inertia combined with heat,
Steve, one forenoon, on stark deliberate feet,
Let the charging-machine's long iron finger beat
The side of his skull in. . . . There was no pain.

For one fierce instant of unconsciousness
Steve tasted the incalculable caress;
For one entire day he slept between
Sheets that were white and cool, embalmed and
clean;

For twenty-four hours he touched the hair of death,
Ran his fingers through it, and it was a deep dark
green—
And he held his breath.

This man is dead.
Everything you can say
Is now quite definitely said.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER.

ON ONE GEORGE BENNETT, A BUTLER

GUIDE and philosopher and friend in one,
Servant of all, subservient to none.

F. G. MONTFORT BEBB.

TO A MAN SLEEPING IN A SUBWAY TRAIN

MAN, you are ugly,
Excruciatingly ugly,
Sleeping in this train
That hurtles your graceless self
Through the black veins of the city.

Yours is the sleep of a sodden lethargy;
Yours is the sleep of a conscious death;
Yours is the sleep of the masses.

Man, you are ugly,
Sleeping in this crowded train,
Where men's eyes spit contempt at you,
And men's lips write smirking sneers
Within the secret pages of their minds:
 You know these pitying smiles
 Curling in the corners of men's mouths.

Man, you are ugly,
Sleeping so,
Unguarded by your little conceits.
Your face shrieks out the dumbness of the clod
Louder than the faces of cows.
There is a heavy stupidity about your eyes and
 mouth,
Known of mute beasts only.

Man, you are ugly,
Sleeping so,
Sleeping the sleep of the masses.
I would shake your limp shoulders,
Even with the mighty hands of revolt.
I would wake you,
Even with the terrible hands of pain,

And cry:

Hear you not the tender voice of beauty
Whose lips press close to the earth
Above the subway's darkness,
That you may hear?

And cry:

Hear you not the swift feet of the wind
Running down the sun splashed street
Over your head,
That you may follow?

And cry:

Good God, man, wake up,
You are ugly,
Sleeping so,
Sleeping the sleep of the masses.

HERSCHELL BEK.

IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

EARTH is a quicksand; yon square tower
Would still seem bold,
But its bleak flinty strength each hour
Is losing hold.

Small sound of grasping undertow
In this green bed!
Who shuts the gate will shut it slow,
Here sleep the dead!

Here sleep, or slept; here, chance, they sleep,
Though still this soil
As mad and clammed as shoals ac creep
Around them boil.

The earth slips down to the low brown
Moss-eaten wall,
Each year, and nettles and grasses drown
Its crumbling crawl.

The dog-rose and ox-daisies on
Time's tide come twirling,
And bubble and die where Joy is gone—
Sleep well, my darling.

Seldom the sexton with shrewd grin,
Near thy grave-cloth,
With withered step and mumble thin
Awakes eve's moth.

Not a farm boy will dare destroy,
Through red-toothed nettles,
The chiff-chaff's nest, and strew the shells
Like fallen petals.

The silver-hooded moth upsprings,
The silver hour,
And wanders on with happy wings
By the hush tower

That reels and whirrs and never drops,
But still is going,
For quicksand not an instant stops
Its deadly flowing.

And is Joy up and dancing there
Where deepening blue
Asks a new star? and is her hair
There freshed with dew?

Here O, the skull of some small wretch,
Some slaughtered jot—
Bones, white as leaf-strigs or chopped twitch—
Thus turned fate's plot.

So lies thy skull? This earth, even this,
Like quicksand weaves.
Sleep well, my darling, though I kiss
Lime or dead leaves.

Sleep in the flux as on the breast,
In the vortex loll;
In mid simoon, my innocence, rest,
In lightning's soul.

Bower thyself! But, joyous eyes,
The deeps drag dull—
O morning smile and song, so lies
Thy tiny skull?

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

THE SON OF MAN

MATTHEW and Mark and Luke and John
Say God was good to look upon.
He bringeth light into the dark,
He bringeth balm for sin and cark.
So said Matthew and Luke and John,
And so said that apostle, Mark.

I do not doubt a word they said,
But I'm alive and they are dead.
I am alive, and Luke and John,
Matthew and Mark, all are gone.
They have no call to earn their bread,
This Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John.

There was a town—Jerusalem,
And a village called Bethlehem.
And up beside a land-locked sea
A little place called Galilee.
And here were Gods, and one of them,
Or so they say, did die for me.

So say Matthew, Luke, and John,
And so says Mark, the other one.
But I, who was not there to see,
I cannot think how it should be.
And Luke and John and Mark are gone,
And scribing Matthew, so is he.

I doubt not they had thoughts like mine,
And liked the girls and loved the wine.
I doubt not once they wasted breath
Like I do here, in Nazareth.
Nor doubt they thought their God divine
By that long lake, Gennesareth.

By Jericho or Babylon
Sleep Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John.
Or maybe in Gethsemane
Or Magdala or Bethany.
Where'er it be—in Gibbithon—
I know they sleep nor think of me.

I know they sleep, nor think of God,
Nor think of me beneath his rod.
They sleep so sound and fancy-free
They do not know how God hurts me.
O never now they think of God,
Never now of God or me.

O Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John,
How wearily I travel on.
O when shall I be up and free
Of this sad load you left to me?
Hard is the bed I lie upon,
Hard as the rocks on Calvary.

F. C. BODEN.

SENTIMENTALITY

SENTIMENTALITY,

You win the love of men
Who look upon you as a soft
And indiscreetly reassuring minx.
You stand upon the street corner
Of their trysts and felonies.
Underneath your glance
Their disappointments grow less harsh
And assume a charmed, theatrical pose,
While their momentary victories
Feel an ardent ownership of life.
Again, to other men you seem
Obnoxious, cloying, and replete
With remedies that merely drug the wound.
To them, you wander through the sharp
And carnal vagaries of life,
And make the faces of men and women
Blind beneath your perfumed handkerchief.
Yet, you are none of the figures
Engraved upon you by the needs of men.
You stand, invincibly compassionate;
Disguised by frail, poetic mockeries;
Held up by an ephemeral erectness
Whose finely knitted lies
Are often better than the stripped
And grossly stooping honesties of life.
You wait for men to corrupt you
With their snivelings and heavy smiles,

*

But at your best you add
A quickly graceful, valiant compensation
To the underpaid and slowly wilting
Slaveries of minds and hearts.

MAXWELL BODENHEIM.

DEEDS UNDONE

He scorned the gifts that fortune brought,
And smiled, and went his way;
For some men still regard I ought
As greater than I may.

The path he trod forgot the sun
In unillumined length;
But deeds that he had never done
Gave him a giant's strength.

GAMALIEL BRADFORD.

EL GALLO

THEY waited, sleeping, on the plaza benches
Until we woke them to the moon at midnight;
And then between the whitened walls they followed,
Playing and singing. A violinist joined them.
We had never seen him before; he had been in the
fields.

From one of the houses came a clarinet
And down from the moon a dozen blanketed
figures . . .
And we danced folk-dances in the market-place.

With half the night before us and no more bottles,
We knocked at several doors, naming them brother,
And then at a shuttered window and called it
darling,
And we saw it coming open with a candle;
Shakes of the head, entreaty, no relenting,
Someone asleep there in the room behind her;
Eyes in the moonlight, lips of silent laughter,
And at last through the window a bottle of pome-
granate wine.

Later she came herself and opened a booth
Under the stars; and on a charcoal fire
Heating the water for our cinnamon-tea,
She poured into every bowl a little glass
Of alcohol and gave new draughts of life
To the driver of the bus, a shoemaker,

Seven musicians, three soldiers with their guns,
A boot-black and a boatman and ourselves.

After our cinnamon-tea with its alcohol,
We carried the blacksmith harpist to his bed,
And, making sure that he was sound asleep,
We spent an hour on the cobblestones
With serenades to the blacksmith's beautiful
daughter . . .

And then we sang, with twenty-seven songs,
Good-night to the moon, good-morning to the sun,
And felt our fellowship to the point of tears.

From my western balcony-window, I watched the
light

Deepen under solid leaves along the hill
And under ledges I had never seen
On the mountain-range and sharpen the sides of
boats . . .

And so it had been under my ribs with music
And with wine, a lovely deepening of the light
A body carries on its own small hill:
I laughed aloud, joining bright earth with earth.

WITTER BYNNER.

THE INTRUDER

QUIETLY from the cottage door he crept,
And slipped into the shadow of the night.
But as he fled, I called upon him, "Death!
Oh coward, have you touched them while they
slept?"

The Shape heard nothing; only crouched and fled.

Then I crossed the threshold; trod the stair,
And stood within the chamber of the dead.
But when I looked; Oh miracle of breath!
The dark marauder had not halted there.

RICHARD CHURCH.

NIGHTFALL

A SWALLOW soaring and dipping,
And a seagull crying.
These are the only living
In a world that is dying.

The sun is drowned in the marshes,
His light quenched in the brakes.
A shiver runs over the barley,
And the wild grass quakes.

The sea tide meets the river,
Their waters, without a sound,
Lock and wrestle in torment.
Night shadows creep over the ground.

RICHARD CHURCH.

THE HOUSE IN THE WEST

I

Where low rains are heavier
Than the sail in haze,
And the cold sea is spread
On the soil to raise harvest,
Black calves are bred to reign over
The fair and behind their green tether,
In a bare land that halves every cloud,
There is a great house.

II

Men with the crowbar,
Breaking a road
From the spar of the dark land,
Have seen those far windows,
While unyoking a cart-load,
Take fire, and a star
Coming over the water
Like Oisín after the heroes.

III

At darkrise the snipe
Strum on the rain;
But in that house, to the lighting
Of rushes, the air of the bagpipe
Blows a reel on the floor:

Big men strike in from a backward parish
And two of them carry a slain boar
Over the thoating of greyhounds.

IV

There is honey spitting from meat
And whitening of the ale there,
Brandy and wine that came from the seas,
Bright candles—and who that delight in
The mind, counting those companies
Of yellow-haired men or of women
That never had envy, would not be pleased
By the laughter, the music and chess-playing?

AUSTIN CLARKE.

PIRATES

PIRATES, after all, were usually
Such young men!
At yard-arms or docks they hanged them,
Or on beaches now and then.
So between the prayers of parsons
At the gallows-tree
In their ears came softly lisping
The whisper of the sea.

Their own sea of sails and fighting,
Of storm and wound,
Scattered with uncharted beaches
For the men that they marooned;
Spanish towns with plate and treasure;
Jungle; fever; heat;
And the clicking of the glasses
In some safe retreat.

In that school a man grew crafty,
Limber in his hates.
Their white scars were often left them
By their bosom mates.
What extraordinary stories
That no one now can know
Died upon those wind-blown gallows
At twenty-one or so!

ELISABETH COATSWORTH.

PREPARATION

BLOND, primitive, among her props and stays
The unfinished schooner towers from the sand.
Her ribs still show gaunt shadows band by band
In Viking savagery across the haze;
Along the half-sheathed sides a pale light plays
Prefiguring the lines her maker planned;
Here shall the masts with all their rigging stand
And here the bowsprit rise above the sprays.

All day the spar-makers are shaping spars,
The rivet hammers pound, and the saws squeal,
Her ribs are scored with white adze-bitten scars,
The drunken scaffoldings about her reel,
So that some night when the gale drowns the stars
She may stamp down the storm beneath her keel!

ELISABETH COATSWORTH.

LESS THAN KIN

HE was a hill man,
And she watched the spray
Until he came and won her
All in a day.

Sea-folk will talk all day,
But mountain-folk are still
And the tide dashes vainly
Against a cliff's will.

He knows not how to answer
Her salt tide of talk.
He goes no further from his hills
Than a day's walk!

*

Though she climb to roof or hill-top
As if her soul to save,
All that her eastward staring sees
Is a hill-wave.

Hill-folk cannot easily
Speak what they feel,
But his look follows her
Like a dog at heel.

Far up a hillside
Seas cannot climb . . .
Her tide of talk is going out
Before its time.

Destiny that mated them
Was less than kind or human;
All in a day to tether
Hill-man . . . sea-woman.

ISABEL FISKE CONANT.

★

EPITAPH

LIKE silver dew the tears of love,
And gold's the smile of joy,
But I had neither, silver, gold,
Nor wit for their employ.

I had no gifts or fancies fair
This poverty to mend:
I was the son of my father,
And had no other friend.

Though he that brings no grist to mill
May con the reckoning o'er,
Who comes into the world with nought
Can scarce go out with more.

A. E. COPPARD.

THE SHADOW

OF life and all its pleasure—
 Would pleasure were its end!—
I would not stint the measure
 To enemy or friend.
Let fate be sour or soothing,
 Untimely or towards,
Live to enjoy each new thing,
 The dream that life affords.

But there's a call supreamer,
 An ultra-mundane goal,
That wakens every dreamer,
 And pledges every soul;
A quickening and a wonder
 That ever onward streams
Of sounding deeds that thunder
 The emptiness of dreams.

*

Yet, suns, for all their brightness,
 Burn not without a shade;
The moon's imperial whiteness
 In blackest nets is laid—
Daedalian ages floated
 The bright ones on their way
With shadows, still devoted,
 Not less, but more, than they.

So, life-enslaved, the spirit
Endures a shadowy claim,
And what is proved of merit
Comes short of all its aim;
Still, like a drowsy farer
Whose dog behind him creeps,
Goes on my soul, the sharer
Of a shade that never sleeps.

Some lewd or idle fancy
Diverts its trembling fire,
Or like a ghost unchancy
Dogs all my fond desire;
O strange phantasmagory
That will not let me be!—
When I would follow glory
My shadow follows me.

A. E. COPPARD.

THE LOSS OF LOVE

ALL through an empty place I go,
And find her not in any room;
The candles and the lamps I light
Go down before a wind of gloom.

Thick-spraddled lies the dust about,
A fit sad place to write her name,
Or draw her face the way she looked
That legendary night she came.

The old house crumbles bit by bit:
Each day I hear the ominous thud
That says another rent is there
For winds to pierce and storms to flood.

My orchards groan and sag with fruit,
Where, Indian-wise, the bees go round;
I let it rot upon the bough;
I eat what falls upon the ground.

The heavy cows go laboring
In agony with clotted teats;
My hands are slack; my blood is cold;
I marvel that my heart still beats.

I have no will to weep or sing,
No least desire to pray or curse;
The loss of love is a bitter thing:
They lie who say that death is worse.

COUNTÉE CULLEN.

LINES FOR A TOMB

RECITE the dangers chiselled on this face:
How I was clipped by scorn and maimed by lies;
How conscience hedged my soul; law chilled my
 eyes;
 Ropes cut my grace.

Recite therewith the flame of victories:
How out of blood and dust I gathered mirth;
And was content to find in flesh and earth
 Strange ecstasies.

But most recite what made me captive here,
Weighted with stone, wrapped in a sluggard's peace,
And ask of men if this is God's release
 Or only his fear.

DONALD DAVIDSON.

CROWNS

LOVE's touch is soft, and Death
Is gentle, when he takes
A sleeping child's light breath,
Before it wakes;
But neither Death nor Love
Moves softer than I move.
Great is my ecstasy,
Till generous I
For common pence have sold
The world my purest gold.
No man that's blind
Has ears more quick to hear;
No man that's deaf and dumb
Has eyes more sharp and clear.
No wonder then that kings,
Envyng the man who sings,
Aspire to wear his crown
And scorn their own;
No wonder kings aspire
For crowns not made of gold,
Which—though Time's born a thief—
Escape his hold.
Two kings have won—
David and Solomon.

*

W. H. DAVIES.

SPACE

SCORN not because my body lives
In such a little place;
Think how my mind, on that account,
Inhabits greater space.

My smallest blossom sometimes is
The Moon or setting Sun;
Seas are my pearls, and forests vast
Have no more trees than one!

The finest scarf or collar made,
To keep a woman warm,
By night or day, on sea or land,
Is still a lover's arm.

W. H. DAVIES.

DARK ELLEN

DARK ELLEN was an honest lass,
Yet beauty she had none,
And foolish lads prize beauty more
Then aught beneath the sun.

And though at dawn she always rose
And swept her cottage floor,
No sweetheart ever sought her hand,
No lover sought her door.

She sat her down to spin her thread,
Her bitter tears fell fast,
She thought of all the days to come,
All lonely like the past.

“Why should a pretty face be all
That lads want in a wife?
A pretty face will lose its bloom,
A good heart lasts through life.

*

“If there be charms against the plague,
Against the evil eye,
If there be charms against the blight
That falls upon the rye—

“If there be charms to bind a lad
When once he loves a lass,
Some magic there may be to bring
Such happiness to pass.”

What flies against the window-pane
Though it is early morning?
What hops within her open door
As if to give her warning?

Dark Ellen let the distaff fall
And shuddered in her fear,
Dark Ellen saw a bat, a toad,
There in the sunlight clear.

She heard the tap, tap of a stick
Out on the smooth flagstones,
She heard an owl hoot thrice, it froze
The marrow in her bones.

She stiffly turned and looked around,
And there in her own cot
Stood the old grey witch of Bloxton Hill
That Satan had begot.

Her withered skin scarce seemed to stretch
Across each gaping bone,
Her yellow eyes were like a cat's,
With warts her neck was strewn.

Her nose was like an eagle's beak,
Her hands were like his claws,
Her yellow teeth like cruel fangs
Within her cruel jaws.

Dark Ellen shuddered where she stood
And tried to say some word,
Dark Ellen moved her parched lips,
But yet no sound was heard.

The old witch held one finger high
And moved a little space,
“Dark Ellen, I have magic brew
To give a lovely face.

“To-night when sets the crescent moon,
And every wind is still,
When in the copse my owl hoots thrice,
Come up to Bloxton Hill.”

A bat flew by, a screech owl called
From out the neighboring wood,
She turned, and in an instant's space
Was gone from where she stood.

*

Dark Ellen sank upon her knees,
Her breath caught in her throat,
A mockingbird sang loud outside,
She did not hear a note.

To Bloxton Hill, where no good folk
Would go for any gain?
To Bloxton Hill, and if she went,
Suppose she went in vain?

Yet that same night when crescent moon
Was gone and winds were still,
When thrice the owl had hooted, she
Went up to Bloxton Hill.

.
“Witch mother, do you brew to-night,
And if so, what’s your brew?”
“Be still, ye five fiends, one and all,
Till I have need of you.”

“Witch mother, do you brew for love,
Or is it death you brew?”
“They may be one, ye goblin folk,
But what is that to you?

“Go search the graveyards far and wide,
Be quick to do your part,
Bring me a dead girl’s once red lips,
Bring me a dead man’s heart.

“Pick sere leaves from the sweetheart bush,
Suck in the poppy’s breath,
Pluck me the henbane’s fetid flower
That only blooms for death.”

The green fire burns on Bloxton Hill,
Yet feeds on wood nor peat,
The green fire sets the pot a-boil,
Yet none can feel its heat.

“Witch mother, who comes down the path
That leads to Bloxton Hill?”

“Now by my cauldron hanging there
Ye goblin folk, be still,

“Or ye will fright away the lass—
Go hide you in the wood!”

She turned, and in that baleful light
Dark Ellen trembling stood.

“Say, Bloxton witch, what must I do,
And what price must I pay?”
Four bats they flew about her face,
Four snakes around her lay.

The witch’s eyes gleam like a cat’s,
“The charm that I have made
Is naught to hurt an honest lass,
You need not be afraid.

*

“Into a vial I shall pour
This liquid of my brewing,
Dark Ellen, take it home with you,
The rest will be your doing.

“For seven nights, then seven more,
Before you go to bed,
Put seven drops upon your hands,
Pour seven on your head.

“And when those two se’nnights are past,
And in the morn you rise,
Look in your glass and see if then
Dark Ellen meets your eyes.”

She filled the vial with her brew,
The liquid sparkled there
And threw an odor strangely sweet
Upon the evening air.

“Hide well this flagon that I give,
Let no one know its savor,
Now get a lover and be wed—
Then I shall ask one favor.”

With trembling hands Dark Ellen took
The vial for her own,
The blood rushed through her veins and yet
A chill cut to the bone.

A great toad spat upon her arm,
A dead hand brushed her face,
She turned about with flying feet
And left the loathsome place.

.
Twice seven days are quickly sped,
Twice seven nights soon pass,
And Ellen rose before the sun
And looked her in the glass.

And there by that pale morning light
Though candle she had none,
She saw the loveliest face that she
Had ever looked upon.

Oh, wide her beauty's fame was spread,
Dark Ellen she no more,
Fair Ellen was she called by all
Who sought her cottage door.

The young squire heard and came to see,
And stayed his love to tell,
Oh, happy were they on the day
When rang the wedding bell.

Oh, happy were they in their love
Till the turning of the year,
Then Ellen heard a sound one night,
And crossed herself in fear.

*

She sat alone and in the wood
She heard an owl hoot thrice,
Trembling she laid her needle down,
Her warm blood turned to ice.

She heard a tap, tap in the hall,
A tap, tap at her door,
A bat flew in and there stood one
That she had seen before.

The Bloxton witch has yellow eyes,
And curved hands like claws,
The Bloxton witch has teeth like fangs
Within her hollow jaws.

Fair Ellen shuddered in her chair
But made her dry lips say:
"You gave me beauty, Bloxton witch,
What is the price I pay?"

The Bloxton witch has wicked eyes,
But softly does she speak,
"The nights grow colder, Ellen Fair,
A little warmth I seek.

"Two arms are better than a fire
To warm when one is cold,
Two arms that reach out tenderly
For one they love to hold.

"Let me but take your place this night
And lie by your husband's side,
Let him think once that I am she
Whom he still calls his bride."

The old witch rubbed her withered hand
Across her bony cheek,
Fair Ellen sat there in her chair
And did not move or speak.

At last her trembling lips made sound:

“My husband is too dear,
Too kind, too loving, and too good
For me to sell him here.”

The old witch laughed her evil laugh,

“Your beauty won his heart,
Could you as poor Dark Ellen keep
Him yours by any art?

“Fair Ellen, if your beauty stays
As you can make it stay,
Are there not other men that you
Could wed another day?”

*

“Why should I wish for other men
Like bees around a bud?
Oh, Bloxton witch, I know you now,
You come to suck his blood!

“I’ll have no beauty at that price,
Take every grace away!
Make me as plain as ever I was
Before that direful day!”

The old witch laughed her wicked laugh,
The bat flew past the door,
Fair Ellen swooned from out her chair
And fell upon the floor.

.

The squire sits in the council hall,
Well pleased is he with life,
He hears no word of what they say,
He thinks of his young wife.

But his grey mare has heard an owl
Hoot three times in the wood,
And his grey mare knows well enough
She calls for nothing good.

His grey mare whinnies where she stands
And restless paws the ground,
The young squire starts up from his seat
And hurries at the sound.

He leaps upon his horse's back
And holds a loosened rein,
The grey mare gallops down the road
And gallops up the lane.

What sound was that Fair Ellen heard
As she lay swooning there?
Her husband's hand was on the latch,
His step was on the stair.

She staggered to her looking glass,
"Now am I no more fair?"
She held the gutted candle high—
Dark Ellen she saw there.

She hid her face within her arm,
The squire was at the door,
"Come in, my husband, you shall see
Fair Ellen never more."

He sat him down as in a dream
And she knelt by his side,
She sobbed her bitter tale and told
How she became his bride.

The squire caught up his dear young wife,
And sat her on his knee,
He gave her one long tender look,
"I see no change," said he.

JULIA JOHNSON DAVIS.

THE GIRL REMEMBERS HER DEAD LOVER

OFTEN with damper paper, sticks, and straw
I have made shift ere now to build a fire:
There have been other mornings chill and raw
As this is, yet not one when dry desire
Smoldered so heavily in breast and limb,
Smoldered so heavily because of him.

The matches flare and splutter. Flame by flame
The thick smoke smothers them. Their stubs are
strewn

About the hearth. . . . We play an ugly game,
Despair and I, frozen in brain and bone,
With dabbled fingers dicing all around
In yesterday's gray ashes on the ground

The coldness grows. The fire will never light,
And presently the house will be astir
With breakfast still to cook and nothing right
And all to do, though I am wearier
Than after a week's work or a long fever.
Would it were over and done with now forever!

EDWARD DAVISON.

THOUGHTS AT THE YEAR'S END

DRAW a clean breath of crisp and moonless air;
Fix eyes upon the dark;
set ears to catch
the knocking of the wind along the ground,
whereto no grass replies, being numb as wire.
The traveling clock you carry everywhere
about with you, the jewel of your bones,
ticks with too little sound,
keeping the time no other soul may share,
making you know
here's night, here's winter, here's year's end
to bear
once more,
and without a god's help, now,
without a devil, and without desire.

O happy Egypt! O most eloquent stones,
heaped like a hill of thunder, frescoed in gold
and black and rusted vermillion,
to comfort a god, the son of the Sun, with riches.
O wise embalmers'
bandages tightly wound, to keep the dignity of the
Pharaoh's bones
unbitten by any tooth, save, it may be,
the envy of a slave.
O black marble nostrils, spread like wings,
squat dark doorways
open to eternal life.

We come upon you, fifty centuries having passed,
we, the sorrowful heirs and assigns
of your grave-treasure, your bread, your heart, your
 rings
buried with you—
we remember, O son of the Sun,
that even the first Father, shining
on the Moskva as on the Rhein, the Seine as on the
 Thames, the Hudson
as on old Nile—
even the Sun is doomed,
and dooms us in a little while.

In His eyes
two thousand years are as a moment.
Now at the winter solstice, when the light is
 squeezed
like a drop of watery chrome on the faded earth,
to be lapped up by a brumous blotter of darkness,
does He remember
the long December night through which the chosen
virgin labored to bring
peace to the people?
(Sing:
holy, holy, holy,
Lord God almighty!)
He endured much—
the kiss of betrayal,
the heavy way up the hard hill,
the ropes, the nails, the spear,

the death agony, the slow, long rending, most the
mockery

He cast upon Himself when He cried out,
"Elohai, Elohai, lama sabachthani?"

That moment is over.

And we, who have seen His peace
shredded by Huns and Romans, priests and kings,
rich men and rabble,

we whom He could not save
(Himself He could not save)

now watch the wintry dark as a sick seaman watches
his coldly tossing grave.

But who are we
that we should envy the Pharaoh,
the Keeper of the House, who built his house
forever,

or that we
should rate the God of the Hebrews, One and
Eternal,
because He turned into a Trinity, and, soon there-
after, ceased?

We are so small
the fleas that crawled over behemoth bulked
larger to that huge pasture than we to the stars,
and to the night the blinking stars are less
than fireflies to the whole wilderness.

O vanity
of man! that would spin Cosmos out of a small
gray clot

locked in a fragile shell.

Say: God is not.

Say: man dies,
every man, alone

(bite on this iron at midnight, when you lie
sleepless, in bed, with half a life gone by, eaten
away—

the day

will be undone,

love and ambition be ashy on your tongue,
and oblivion

will roll its weight upon you, ton and giant ton).

Say: God is not, death's instant, history's
a fever the moon died of—

what way now?

There's no help in the hills, for they will crumble,
nor in the skies, for earth is a dropped stitch
in their pattern

(but even to fumble, there must be Fingers,
and for a pattern—Mind) . . .

Reach out, reach out, you will touch nothing,
you will find

nothing,

but yet reach,

with the balked pressure of the blind on emptiness,
reach, grope, seize, shape.

Or, let the ice-blue winding-sheet
that waits for earth

swaddle your infant wisdom at the birth,
or, from the cracked bones of despair
suck marrow,
and bend Now
backward and forward in your spirit's heat.
And bear . . . and bear . . .

BABETTE DEUTSCH.

SYRIAN SONG

SAID old Hafiz to Sihun the youth:

“When Sorrow comes and enters at your door
And you start up trembling and weep and wring
your hands—

Be sure that Sorrow is yet but a stranger to you.

“But when he enters to you and you do not stir,
But keep on mending your old sandal,
With your head a little on one side
And your dull eyes on your work,
Then may you say with assurance,
‘Yes, I know who it is. It is Sorrow.’ ”

LOUIS DODGE.

FROM "HIPPOLYTUS TEMPORIZES"

ACT II.—SCENE I.

(A strip of sea-coast.)

Evening

PHAEDRA: O how I hate,
radiant, cold and drear,
Greece with its headlands,
Greece with icy fervour,
Greece with its high encounter
and endeavour,
Greece and Greek cities
for their arrogance,
each with particular grace,
each claiming god
for some peculiar ardour,
differing each from each,
yet each complete,
spirit, mind, arrogance
of small material wealth,
each soul unto itself;
is there no merging,
no hint of the east?
no carelessness
nor impetuosity of speech?
can no one greet
my south?

*O glorious,
sweet,
red, wild pomegranate mouth?*
O my heart breaks and burns,
yet can not conquer,
can not merge with this,
this world of radiance and rock
and ice and shale and peace.

MYRRHINA: Cease, Cretan lady,
queen of the red sands
and the imperious peak
of Ida
where Zeus reigns.

PHAEDRA: O how I hate
this world, this west, this power
that strives to reach
through river, town or flower,
the god or spirit that inhabits it;
O, is it not enough to greet
the red-rose
for the red, red sweet of it?
must we encounter
with each separate flower,
some god, some goddess?
must each peculiar hour,
dawn, day or night,
take its particular prayer?
why must we pause and bear

not only beauty
of each beautiful thing,
but suffer more, more, more,
the associated spirit with its power?
this tyranny of spirit
that is Greece;
speak, my Myrrhina,
must I long endure
this swarm of alien gods
and this cold shore?

MYRRHINA: O lady, lady, lady,
luminous more
than any spray of myrtle
or white flower
of the enchanted flowering citron-tree
that flowers and fruits
and each gleam separately,
the wax-sweet petal
by the fruit's rare gold,
listen nor count as cold
a land where purple decks your small-
est ways,
where a king follows
courting through long days.

PHAEDRA: What is the dotard love
of a dull king,
Myrrhina? I know
what love might have been.

MYRRHINA: O lady, lady, lady,
luminous more
than golden spray of orange
or white flower
of pearl and fire,
the citron and its leaf,
O glorious
beyond belief,
Phaedra,
endure,
have strength a little more;
we shall prevail,
we will outrule this pallid shore
and sail
back to bright Crete,
its sun-lit slopes, its vales
of orange, citron,
its bright tree of myrtle;
we will escape,
radiant in all our power;
listen, endure,
O golden lily-flower.

PHAEDRA: We all think, every one,
sometime our power is broken,
our fame gone,
our beauty stricken,
and our graciousness
fit only for some dark and barren
place,

where old, old women croak
about the loom
or pace and chatter
graceless in the sun.

MYRRHINA: Come, come
my lady,
myrrh-trees bend to bless
in Crete,
the very footfall
where you pass.

PHAEDRA: The tall myrrh-forest
of my distant land
has nothing now of loveliness,
its sand
white and pure gold
that drifts beneath the steps
of the king's built-up summer palaces,
holds no more marvellous glint,
nor any magic
lures me with old enchantments
and old songs;
O Crete shows dead and pallid
by the flame
and beauty
that has given Greece its fame.

Escape?
escape?

for me there is no place
can hide his fervour,
fervour of flame-lit face,
beauty as of the god that flees the sun.

MYRRHINA: Dearest, my lady,
do not speak of this,
O do not breathe, however faint, that
name,
peace, O my princess,
think of your great fame,
remember Crete and all those palaces,
remember all the glitter of your dead,
recall the mighty pleasaunce of the
king
your father,
and the blue, blue of its walls,
remember Phaedra is above all, all,
a queen.

PHAEDRA: Ah, friend,
Myrrhina,
once I might have been
proud with gold head-dress
like a flame-lit flower
or candle set in some bright altar-
niche;
now I am stricken
like a flame-struck bough.

H. D.

JASON AT CORINTH

CRACKED, yellow, blistering,
Salt-caked and gaping—every plank a wreck—
Between the eastern and the western seas,
Her prow pushed forward to the rising sun,
There stands the ship, the first ship made with
 hands:

The mother of the fifty men who bore
Her on their shoulders, nine days over the earth,
Between the inner and the outer sea.

And now their sons
Are setting out for Troy. At Aulis gather
A thousand ships—black-sailed, vermillion-prowed,
But none of my blood in them. I have naught,
Nor wife nor child nor kin nor friend nor home;
Only this staring wreck
Where the rocks part the seas.

Only this wreck at last,
Rotting and nude and huge,
And strength that fails in me,
Snapping like these old beams;
A dream of Colchis and the Golden Fleece
Which other men have long forgot,
A memory that fades and dies
In one old weary brain.

The sea is whispering to the young men's blood
No more of my strange wandering;

It breaks into another song,
Of Troy's high walls and Helen's face,
And Priam's house of gold.
Had I but known which of two ways to choose,
I would have taken the safe, easy way;
Assumed my kingship, married, and had sons,
Traded in easy seas and sent at last
A hundred sail to equal Agamemnon's
Best-fitted host.

But now
This is the end, the very end, the last
Of striving and the limit of my pain.
The Gods have hidden this from me till now,
But now I see the pathway I have trod,
Marked with grey milestones—blood and shame
and tears—
Straggle at last, and stop. The House of Sleep

Is open by the all-forgetting sea.
And there I soon shall rest. No one will sing
Of me as of Achilles and those men
Now going to their doom. But yet, at times,
Some men will speak of me in casual talk,
And wondering what it was that stood between
Me and my thwarted purpose, say this word:
"So many toils he faced to lose his quest;
So many griefs he found ere grief could sleep."

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER.

TO ALMIGHTY GOD

WITH your outlaws, O God, let me stand up at the
judgment;
With those who blasphemed you because they
sought you always;
With those who denied you, because you denied
yourself to them,
With those who were broken upon the great terrible
wheel of the earth.
With those who hated themselves, because they
loved you,
With those who laboured against themselves because
you cursed their labour,
With those to whom life was vain struggle, and
time was worth nothing but for a glimpse of
your face,
With your outlaws, O God, I claim at last a place.

Grant me, O God,
Not to know bodies only but the souls behind them;
Not the green garment that the earth wears, but the
fire of her naked breath,
Not the blue-cloud-ridden sky but the song of the
lark as it soars
Like a young bridegroom, joyous, through the
great mystery of those spaces.
Let me look up at the stars and love them, lawless,
Let me love men and women, even though you warn
me not to love them.

Since all the temples made with hands fall into dust
before your face,
Since this song too is useless, a vain cry unheard
and uncomprehended,
Since I at bottom am lawless, and you have promised and said,
That the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and
the violent shall take it by storm,
Place me among the outlaws, the broken and weary,
the followers of every lost cause upon earth.
Make me now one of them, fill me with their fury,
let me, as they, seek you face to face,
Beyond the last illusion, where amid the shouting
stars
Throned upon fire, in garments sealed with eternal
sacrifice
Sacred and glorious, flesh and spirit fused and
merged in one;
You turn the great wheel of the world beneath your
bleeding feet.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER.

THE WAXWORKS

Madame Tussaud's—Perished by Flame
18 March 1925

*(Bartholomew Crump, janitor, died on Maundy
Thursday 9 April 1925, three weeks after the
burning.)*

“WHY are you wandering, Bartholomew, so sadly,
With bony sharp chin plunged into your breast,
And feet shimble-shamble and knees knock-a-
knocking,
And fingers a-twitching and eyes never at rest?

“Men all must die, and were you immortal
That now you look gloomy as tricked out of
breath?
Was life all so easy, age so delightful,
That now so morosely you murmur at death?

“Long ere you died you were dead, Bartholomew,
And rattled your thigh-bones in mounting the stairs,
And now like the dead that gloomed at you from
cases,
O creaking Effigy! your glassy eye glares.

“Even then, like the dead, your frogged uniform
covered
Scarce co-ordinate bones and creased parchment-
like skin;

You smelt dusty and camphored to keep the moth
from you,
And your lungs but half filled and your heart beat
thin. . . .

“Long ere you died you were dead, and I pitied you.
Why, then, now you’ve left all the counterfeit dead,
And another in your frogged coat will cry, *This*
way, please,
Why’s your hand shaking, dejected your head?”

“I know you well, Sir,—”

“Speak up, I scarce hear you:
Bless me, how your tongue hangs!”

“—Sir, I know you well,
I know you, I say. But O, Sir, have patience.
’Tis my grief that speaks—O, how shall I tell!”

“Take your time, Bartholomew—a slice of Eternity
Will never be missed, a thousand years is to run
To twilight, and then five thousand to morning.
Speak when you’re ready: no—never mind—sit
down.”

.
“’Twas untrue that you spoke—how long ere I died
I was like all those dead, mere dust and a smell.
I’d watched them, talked of them, ay, and listened
when
One another they whispered; ’twas like a low bell

“That goes rolling and returning from stone on to
stone,
For one note a hundred, then dying away.
If I moved their looks followed me, when I rested
they rested,
I was wax to their wax, they were clay to my clay.

“And all that is past! Now here am I, lonely,
And like the dust sleeping when no wind stirs.
And they too are perished and here am I, lonely,
And no one to pity, for no one cares.”

“—Poor silly Bartholomew! They were all un-
real,
Dumb figures, mere waxworks, simulacra and
shows.
Absurd you should think them alive and articulate,
And now go lamenting that nobody knows!

“Here in the world of the Shades, undying,
Here all is simple and soothlike and dimmed—
Here are King, Pope, Courtier and all Carnality,
Queens, and supplanters of Queens light-limbed.

“That was Helen paused here but a moment ago,
And Mary the Scot paced proudly away;
Lascivious Priests edged after the pair of them,
And a starry Admiral glittered like day.

“Here, Bartholomew, here’s life indeed,
Change-defeating and old Death outfacing,

All as they were and evermore shall be
In the ancient habiliment and custom'd pacing.

"Here's life, Bartholomew—*Life!* What more?"
"—There's none of them here I knew, as I knew
them.

The ruddy are pale, the splendid are fallen,
O, Sir, these are not as the artist once drew them.

'Tis all my grief! O the fire that upwrited
Like a snake through the stairway's lit fissure and
crept
On a puffing air, and then like a Dragon,
A dragonish Death, on the gallery leapt.

"O the smoke that lifted like a thick-leaved tree
And then like a tree consumed in fierce flame,
The flame's congregation that rose up and roared
And spangled the hall with million gleam.

"The fire froze me, I stiffened like one in a trance.
Unstirring I stood, and useless to stir,
With the drums of the fire on my ears rolling
loudly
And the eyes of the fire fixing my eyes with their
glare."

"—You were crazed, Bartholomew, because your
familiars
Melted to nourish the flood with their wax.

'Twas remorse—”

“O, never remorse so bitter.

'Twas my bones seemed to melt, my thin sinews
relax.

Maybe 'twas a moment, maybe 'twas a year,
Maybe 'twas a dream and I already a ghost,
But I saw and I heard as the Judgment Day break-
ing,
And Archangels summoning the heavenly Host.

The trumps and the fire called the sleepers from
sleep,
Glass shivered and cracked as the flame lifted its
tongue.
They stirred in bewilderment, they cried and I
hearkened,
And fain had cried back, but speechless hung.”

“—’Twas all but a witchery. In a pagan cavern
A witch was melting their images slowly,
And whispering an ancient spell and spinning
Fatal syllables of a song unholy;

’Twas this, Bartholomew.”

“—’Twas the Judgment Day
Rehearsed for warning of all evil livers.
I heard their cries, I saw them appealing
With jewelled hands sliding in molten rivers.

THE WANNING THINGS INTO OTHER THINGS
Yearned as they melted. The lips that kissed
The lips that smiled, grew suddenly piteous,
And famous faces in a crazy twist

Slipped into ruin that I could not read,
While still the Archangels' shrilly blast
Echoed, and I awoke from trance or dreaming,
And fear beset me as I fled then and cast

All behind in a moment's mad terror,
All my old life, forgetting life to be,
All my old familiars and accustomed faces,
And fled back to safety and perplexity."

"—Why, Bartholomew, you, a lover of beauty?
You, repining because of beauty past reach?
You æsthetical, you, you sentimental,
You an evangelist with trick of pious speech!"

"—It is easy to mock. It was not for beauty,
'Twas because I had known them! that I loved so
well.

Not the beauties only, the brave and the lordly,
But all those others, they too had a spell.

Where now is Fred Archer, where is Dan Leno,
Where's Horatio Bottomley and General Booth,
Where's Bloody Mary and Charles the Second,
And the Princes slain in the Tower in their youth?

O, and Napoleon, so marble and grand,
And Marie Antoinette piteously bright,
The wise-looking head of calm Robespierre,
And Marat's fierce mouth and gaping sight?

Where now is Neil Cream, where is poor Crippen,
That died for women; where's Seddon now?
Where's Charlie Peace and Palmer the poisoner,
And Stinie Morison and Mahon and Lowe;
And Smith that drowned his wives in a bath,
And moat-farm Dougal and Southend Read;
Where's Mrs. Dyer the baby-farmer,
That were all hanged or jailed—and now burned
when dead?

Where's Fowler and Milsom, blood-thirsting still,
That died contending for each other's life;
And Burke and Hare, those bloodier hunters,
And the Mannings hanged public,¹ husband and
wife?

And that French Landru whose eyes flickered at me
Whenever I turned and passed him by?
—All defaced or utterly melted,
And no one to see and pity, but I.”

“—Why, man, they were not all lost, and time
Must needs have come when you watched them no
more.”

“—I know, I know, and 'tis bitter remembering,
But bitter past bearing to think, *No more!*”

¹ Witnessed by Herman Melville when he visited England in 1849—“a most wonderful, horrible and unspeakable scene.”

For O, Sir, I knew them, and often I fancied
They knew me also and their look was kind.
Year after year they had heard my slow footstep;
To me their eyes no longer were blind.

And things they could say not aloud I could hear,
And the thoughts I could not utter they knew.
Ill things they murmured, but some were gentle,
And some lied still, but some could speak true.

The proud and the great were as the evil—
Lonely alike in silentness—
And any friendly thought that brushed them
Eased them in their loneliness.

Now even their images are dissolved,
The crowds that passed them and I that stayed
Are gone, and their own presences perished;
And I that lived on awhile, afraid,

With dreams that brought them staring at me,
As they had stared down year after year,—
I also sickened as if they drew me
Down to this dark. And I died of fear.”

“—Enough, Bartholomew, your talk grows morbid;
Shake off your melancholy, hush that sigh.
There’s a music, listen!”

“—’Tis that thin piping
Sharpens the thoughts that will not die.”

JOHN FREEMAN.

WOMAN AND PROFESSOR

HE stood and pointed with scorn at a Bond Street
window,

A quaint, dry figure in that delectable place.

"All this finery," he said, "all these fripperies, all
these gewgaws—

Isn't it a disgrace

That a woman should spend money as if it were
water

To deck her body and her face?"

"And yet," I said, "but for some pre-historic creature
Adjusting the folds of her garment with purpose-
ful care

Or spending the long hours twisting this way and
that way

The strands of her hair,

Possibly neither great London, nor you, friend
Professor,

Nor I, might be there."

ROSE FYLEMAN.

VILLAGES

THE inland villages are fair;
Above their roads the high trees meet
And shelter houses white and square
That front a quiet street.

And folk are there whose one desire
Is in all fellowship to dwell;
And there's a white church with a spire,
And doves about its bell.

And there are food and hearth and chair
For any traveler who asks,
And gentle maids with banded hair
Go softly on their tasks.

But villages beside the sea
Are rough as wind and fierce as light,
And brown-skinned girls dance wild and free
When fiddles play at night.

And love and death have equal rates,
And men are strong and loud of speech,
And make a housing for their mates
From wrecks that strew the beach.

In inland villages they grow
The herb called heartsease—would that we
Might find it there who long ago
Turned hawk-like to the sea.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

WET NIGHT

Now that the evening shuts with rain,
And early creeps the pallid light
Unmourned from fields of sodden grain,
And in untimely night
The brave confusion of my flowers
Is quenched, I sit as lovers will
Who gaze at loss through timeless hours.
Cold is my heart, and still.

But it was hot with pity when
At noonday from window high
I watched black weather from the west
Steal on a summer sky.

O, it was torn with sadness then
To feel light dimmed, sweet air forlorn
With change, and gusty dark unrest
Fever the deep-breath'd morn.

*

For soon the wing of heaven was crushed
With inky smudges on its bloom,
And wildflowers deep in meadows hushed
Shivered against the gloom;
And water's lustrous limbs fell still,
Bright shadows to one sick shade grew,
And, as I watched, each dreaming hill
Woke, a tense watcher too.

Then ran a shudder through the air,
And harassed winds began to sigh
And tear the ashen tree-tops where
Dark storm rags whipped the sky.
And when at last from window high
I turned with dragging steps away,
My heart was dark with pain, for I
Had seen grow sick, and pale, and die
The beauty of a day.

BARRINGTON GATES.

FROM DISCIPLE TO MASTER

(To A. E.)

My life is like a dream,
I do not know
How it began, nor yet
How it will go.

Out of the night a bird
Has quickly flown
Across the lighted room,
And now is gone

Into the dark again
From whence it came—
So the old druids said,
And I the same.

★

But we are not content,
I, like them too,
Questioning all I meet
Seek something new.

Saying to each who comes,
“So much is clear,
But, if you know of more
I wait to hear.

“The dark, the lighted room,
The bird which flies

Are not enough for man
Who one day dies.

“Are not enough for man,
That bird which came
Out of the dark and must
Return again.

“If you know more besides,
Tell what you know,
O wise and travelled souls,
Before I go.”

MONK GIBBON.

★

THE HOUSE

PRESENTLY when the stir
Dies in the little street,
When I no longer heed
Chatter or passing feet;

When I have learnt to use
Window and door and bolt,
How to outwit the knave
How to expel the dolt;

No longer mocked by lies
No longer prey to fool,
No longer tyrannised,
I shall begin to rule.

*

Too much confusion now,
Too wild a discontent,
Too many voices heard,
Servants grown insolent:

Time to assert the will,
Time to make clear my choice,
Time to begin to speak
With a more certain voice:

Ordered at last throughout,
Ridden of bat and mouse,
Presently I shall be
Master in my own house.

MONK GIBBON.

THE GOLDEN ROOM

Do you remember the still summer evening
When in the cosy cream-washed living-room
Of the Old Nailshop we all talked and laughed—
Our neighbors from the Gallows, Catherine
And Lascelles Abercrombie; Rupert Brooke;
Eleanor and Robert Frost, living awhile
At Little Iddens, who'd brought over with them
Helen and Edward Thomas? In the lamplight
We talked and laughed, but for the most part
listened

While Robert Frost kept on and on and on
In his slow New England fashion for our delight,
Holding us with shrewd turns and racy quips,
And the rare twinkle of his grave blue eyes.

We sat there in the lamplight while the day
Died from rose-latticed casements, and the plovers
Called over the low meadows till the owls
Answered them from the elms; we sat and talked—
Now a quick flash from Abercrombie, now
A murmured dry half-heard aside from Thomas,
Now a clear laughing word from Brooke, and then
Again Frost's rich and ripe philosophy
That had the body and tang of good draught-cider
And poured as clear a stream.

'T was in July
Of nineteen-fourteen that we sat and talked;
Then August brought the war, and scattered us.

Now on the crest of an Ægean Isle
Brooke sleeps and dreams of England. Thomas
lies
'Neath Vimy Ridge where he among his fellows
Died just as life had touched his lips to song.

And nigh as ruthlessly has life divided
Us who survive, for Abercrombie toils
In a black Northern town beneath the glower
Of hanging smoke, and in America
Frost farms once more, and far from the Old
Nailshop
We sojourn by the Western sea.

And yet
Was it for nothing that the little room
All golden in the lamplight thrilled with golden
Laughter from hearts of friends that summer night?
Darkness has fallen on it, and the shadow
May never more be lifted from the hearts
That went through those black years of death, and
live.

And still, whenever men and women gather
For talk and laughter on a summer night,
Shall not that lamp rekindle, and the room
Glow once again alive with light and laughter,
And like a singing star in time's abyss
Burn golden-hearted through oblivion?

WILFRID GIBSON.

FRAIL STRENGTH

As bits of lichen or of weed,
By drawing moisture and the dew,
Will slowly dig their fingers in
And slowly split a rock in two,

My songs at length will drink up strength,
And like frail fingers of the fern
Upon the world's hard rock, will crack
The boulder of its unconcern.

LOUIS GINSBERG.

THE MISTRESS OF THE INN

WHAT, does one spread the table for a stranger
Before he's showed his passport, signed his name?
A harbor-town like this, we're all in danger
Of being left with the sack. I ruled the same
For all comers—they'll remember how I said it:
First, if you please, the color of my pay?
To you, you only, I'd have given credit;
You could have chalked the slate and sailed away,

You who, entering, halted, let your quick glance
scan
The place, tossed a scornful sixpence to the
porter. . . .
No ships, these days. . . . That tight-fisted harri-
dan,
Life, might at least give back as good as I've
brought her
—I who watch above a waste of gray-green water
The flappings of a mateless pelican.

ELLEN GLINES.

PORTRAIT

JANE W. . . .

SHE does not seem to care,
She does not know her hair
Is golden with a hint
Of Trojan ashes in't.
She does not seem to know
How rarely dark eyes go
With honey-coloured hairs
Drowning the coral ears.

She does not know her worth,
She thinks that Love is mirth,
And laughs; I never saw
Beauty more free from awe.
What could she do but choose
Her body young and loose,
Her calm and easy ways
And that wide and level gaze?
And maybe in that dress
Add to her loveliness.

*

The Past was mine—but O
With this unmelted snow
America has caught
The eye of all my thought:
Helen, your foster town
Once and for all is down,

And now Grand Rapids race
To take Scamander's place,
Araby the Blest
Loses the Phoenix nest!

And now, and now
My song shall tell—but how?
Can poetry compose
The budding of a rose,
Or prosody out-do
The throstle in the yew,
Or memory make up
For Life and love and hope?
Before her living word
My singing is absurd:
“You have my hand,” she said,
“Where shall I put my head?”

*

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOCARTY.

AS WELL AS ANY OTHER

As well as any other, Erato,
I can dwell separately on what men know
In common secrecy
And celebrate the old adored rose,
Re-tell—oh, why—how similarly grows
The last leaf of the tree.

But for familiar sense what need can be
Of my most singular survey or me
If homage may be done
(Unless it is agreed we shall not break
The patent silence just for singing's sake)
As well by anyone?

Reject me not, then, if I have begun
Unwontedly or if I seem to shun
The close and well-tilled ground.
For in untraveled soil alone can I
Unearth the gem or let the mystery lie
That never must be found.

*

LAURA RIDING GOTTSCHALK

MANY GENTLEMEN

MANY gentlemen there are born not babes.
They will be babes, they will be babes
In the shades.
They will dribble, they will babble,
They will pule in pantomime
Who were not babes in baby time.

Of such infant sorrow
Will they whimper
On Aspasia's bosom
In the shades tomorrow:
Many gentlemen, many gentlemen frowning,
But not Socrates simpering among these,
Who was well weaned of her honey
In his prime and needs no pap now,
Having long ago with baby eyes
Smiled upward to her learned brow.

LAURA RIDING GOTTSCHALK.

MY PROUD DARK-EYED SAILOR

(To the air of "Castle O'Neill.")

My brave boy is far from me,
Oh, my sorrow, on a strange, distant shore—
My proud, dark-eyed sailor,
When shall I see him once more?
With heart near to the breaking,
In the harvest field lonesome I bind.
It is alone I'm hay-making,
When each girl has her boy close and kind.

Ah, heavy the steps I take,
As to Chapel on the Sunday I walk.
Since he's not to meet me,
With his fond looks and low, tender talk;
While my rose-tree richly flowering,
Whose blossom he plucked for my breast,
Its petals sadly is showering,
At the long, bitter blast from the West.

But deep down within my heart,
There's a dear hope we'll be meeting next spring,
My proud, dark-eyed sailor!
And our marriage bells sweetly shall ring;
Till beside you walking, high-headed,
Under Castle O'Neill's shining towers,
Upon your arm, when we're wedded,
We'll pass through a pelting of flowers.

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

THE CORNER-KNOT

I WAS a child and overwhelmed: Mozart
Had snatched me up fainting and wild at heart
To a green land of wonder, where estranged
I dipped my feet in shallow brooks, I ranged
Rough mountains and fields yellow with small
vetch

Of which though long I tried I could not fetch
One single flower away, nor from the ground
Pocket one pebble of the scores I found
Twinkling enchanted there. So for relief
"I'll corner-knot," said I, "this handkerchief
Faithful familiar that I hold or shake
In these cool airs for proof that I'm awake."
I tied the knot: the aspens all around
Shook and the river-reeds were filled with sound;
Which failing presently, the insistent loud
Clapping of hands returned me to the crowd.
I felt and fumbling took away with me
The knotted witness of my ecstasy:
But flowers and streams were vanished past recall,
The aspens, the sad singing reeds and all.

Vanished: but that was twenty years ago.
Now again listening to Mozart I know
What then I never guessed that he, Mozart
Himself, had been snatched up by curious art
To my green land: estranged and wild at heart
He too had crossed the brooks, essayed to pick

That yellow vetch with which the plains are thick,
And being put to it, as I had been
To smuggle back some witness of the scene,
Had knotted up his broad silk handkerchief
In common music, rippling flat and brief,
And home again, had sighed above the score,
"Yes, a remembrancer but nothing more."
Oh most mistaken, for that faithful knot
Once charged to witness how and where and what,
Though in itself a dumb and idle thing
Will yet by art again contrive to bring
Convoys of novices to that green land:
They gasp and stare and quite dumb-founded stand.

ROBERT GRAVES.

ON THE ALBERT MEMORIAL

IMMORTAL Albert, why this mortal strife
On thy Memorial twixt Death and Life—
That all too deathless tinsel round thy head,
And round thy feet those all too lifeless dead?

GEORGE ROSTREVOR HAMILTON.

OLD CHRISTMAS MORNING

A Kentucky Mountain Ballad

"WHERE you coming from, Lomey Carter,
So airy over the snow?
And what's them pretties you got in your hand,
And where you aiming to go?

"Step in, Honey: Old Christmas morning
I ain't got nothing much;
Maybe a bite of sweetness and corn bread,
A little ham meat and such.

"But come in, Honey! Sally Anne Barton's
Hungering after your face.
Wait till I light my candle up:
Set down! There's your old place.

"Now where you been so airy this morning?"
"Graveyard, Sally Anne.
Up by the trace in the salt lick meadows
Where Taulbe kilt my man."

"Taulbe ain't to home this morning . . .
I can't scratch up a light:
Dampness gets on the heads of the matches;
But I'll blow up the embers bright."

"Needn't trouble. I won't be stopping:
Going a long ways still."
"You didn't see nothing, Lomey Carter,
Up on the graveyard hill?"

"What should I see there, Sally Anne Barton?"
"Well, sperits do walk last night."
"There were an elder bush a-blooming
While the moon still give some light."

"Yes, elder bushes, they bloom, Old Christmas,
And critters kneel down in their straw.
Anything else up in the graveyard?"
"One thing more I saw:

"I saw my man with his head all bleeding
Where Taulbe's shot went through."
"What did he say?" "He stooped and kissed me."
"What did he say to you?"

"Said, Lord Jesus forguv your Taulbe;
But he told me another word;
He said it soft when he stooped and kissed me.
That were the last I heard."

"Taulbe ain't to home this morning."
"I know that, Sally Anne,
For I kilt him, coming down through the meadow
Where Taulbe kilt my man,

"I met him up on the meadow trace
When the moon were fainting fast,
And I had my dead man's rifle gun
And kilt him as he come past."

"But I heard two shots." " 'Twas his was second:
He shot me 'fore he died:
You'll find us at daybreak, Sally Anne Barton:
I'm laying there dead at his side."

ROY HELTON.

THE DARK BREED

WITH those bawneen men I'm one,
In the grey dusk-fall,
Watching the Galway land
Sink down in distress—
With dark men, talking of grass,
By a loose stone wall,
In murmurs drifting and drifting
To loneliness.

Over this loneliness,
Wild riders gather their fill
Of talking on beasts and on fields
Too lean for a plough,
Until more grey than the grey air,
Song drips from a still,
Through poteen, reeling the dancing—
Ebbing the grief now!

Just, bred from the cold lean rock,
Those fellows have grown;
And only in that grey fire
Their lonely days pass
To dreams of far clovers
And cream-gathering heifers, alone
Under the hazels of moon-lighters,
Clearing the grass.

Again in the darkness,
Dull knives we may secretly grease,
And talk of blown horns on clovers
Where graziers have lain;
But there rolls the mist
With sails pulling wind from the seas—
No bullion can brighten that mist,
O brood of lost Spain.

So we, with the last dark men,
Left on the rock grass,
May brazen grey loneliness
Over a poteen still
Or crowd on the bare chapel floor
Hearing the Mass,
To loosen that hunger
Broken land never can fill.

F. R. HIGGINS.

LET US CONSTRUCT A GOD

It would be pleasant to believe that you,
My sweet, and I,
And all things near to us—
Other men's bodies, earth, the floating blue
Slope of the sky,
Soft worms ravenous

And eager in the dark, white whirling snow,
Crisp insects, grass,
And the glistering air—
Are tenuous semblances that waken, glow,
Sparkle, or pass
In mist away, or reappear

Again in the swift thought of some one Being;
That we are crystal phantoms
Fluttering in a room
Whose walls are too strange, too distant for our
seeing.

. . . And thus the anthems
We chanted in the gentle gloom

Of churches, are but echoes of an echoing.
All our wise books
And beads and worshipping
Are but reflections twice reflected of a Thing
That thinking, looks
Into a well of space, a glittering spring,

And wills the image of Its thought—perfect, un-
wavering.

.
Sweet, it would be good so to believe, for then
All things near to us
That we have seen or dreamed
Or half forgot—beasts, dying men,
Slow stars, and rust,
Frost that has gleamed

Through the low-bending night on a black-stemmed
bush—
All these would grow
Together in a warm communion.
For would not the level sea with its windless hush
And your voice and my voice know
Each other as kindred echoes in the mind of One
That shadows Itself alike in clouds and in moun-
tains of stone?

ROBERTA HOLLOWAY.

TO GRAMMAR

DAUGHTER of Alexandrian pedantry,
Mysterious descendant of the Sphinx,
Born to confuse the honest mind that thinks
To probe the hidden deeps of history
And overpass the perils of the sea
 Of alien languages; the swimmer sinks
 In thy cross-currents, Grammar, and he drinks
Deep of the salt brine of perplexity.
Ah, happy he who scorns thy fettering rules,
 Who dares to wander through the realms of
 speech
Untrammelled by traditions of the schools;
 Who, like the wave that dashes on the beach,
Moves on majestic, nor regards the fools
 Who crush with petty laws the minds they seek
 to teach.

M. W. HUGHES.

HOMO ADDITUS NATURAE

OH, my young fellow, innocently going
Across earth's colored acres, stride by stride,
Wrapped in your cloak of mood, and gaily showing
A scarf of modern thought, too bright to hide,
Under the trees, and over water flowing,
You pass with roaming eyes, preoccupied
With what you wear, aloof to stones, unknowing
The pull and power working at your side.

Some day a ragged, curious old man
Will come and sun his reminiscient bones,
Hungry to keep what permanence he can,—
The potent trees, the dull magnetic stones,—
Still unaware how cunningly they drew
Him into them, long since, when he was you.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES.

LINES ON GROWING OLD

SIMEON to Mary: "Yea,
 A sword shall pierce thine heart."
 So saint to saint; we have another way
 With swords to pierce the heart.
 Rabbi Ben Ezra dogmas in the hand,
 Hack we the blade-edge privily first, then stand
 Shod with evasion for the strife to start.

So I perceive myself meet age—
 Tossing a night or two with the surprise
 Of puckered weariness around the eyes
 That does not pass; but speedily the stage
 Of placing character in scars and lines
 Above the surface perfectness of youth. "Signs
 Of some suffering, a little thought," says she,
 Into a mirror, held not quite so near.
 Then for a palate altered there will be
 Almost no need of recompense.
 For who endowed with self-preserving sense
 Would shed one tear
 For having lost fastidiousness, and substituted
 For lust of life importunate that looted
 Realm after realm and found their wealth to fail,
 A Hedonism built on humbler scale?
 Love is, 'tis true (I hear old age debate),
 A most absorbing form of sport,
 But, if my memory does not distort,
 Its painfulness would rule it out of court

In any well-conducted State.
At that, one hope alone there might be left,
That I should feel the blade-point through a cleft
In all this plate and mail of cowardice;
The sick glance on me of a dancing miss,
Pitying not—loathing the self-to-be.
Unless I should know better than to see.

LYN LLOYD IRVINE.

EROS

I SEE in your eyes what you have seen:
Laughter and wonder and dark wet trees
With the naked buds close clinging,
And a wind that races with swift bare knees
On the darkened earth and across the sheen
Rippled and roughened and cold and gray,
Shaken and trembling and clear and gray,
Of the lake and the wild duck winging.

I see in your eyes what you have seen:
One gray drake and another gray drake
And a young gray duck at the edge of the lake—
The cries and the splashing, the joy of the fight,
And the sudden rhythm of three in flight.
Low, high, in the cloudy sky.
Low, high, curve and dip!
She in the lead with taut neck steering,
This way, that way, turning, veering.
Low, high, curve and dip,
And the echo of the exultant note
That challenged her mate from her sure gray throat.

Deep in your eyes what you have seen!
The shaken water, the leafless trees,
And the long gray flight that swept between
Gray as the clouds a March wind flings
From sky to sky, till above your head
They dipped, and a glory of purple spread,

A flashing oval of purple spread,
Like a sunlit sword, like a shout from the dead,
Like the naked pulse of a new born world,
Like a banner, suddenly unfurled
From the secret silver under their wings.

Low, high, curve and dip.
Gray, were they gray?
Suddenly into the lake they slip,
The one half-hearted backs away,
The other turns into the wind and flow.
Did she see, did she know?
Purple and silver are hidden away,
And he calls with a quiet protecting note,
While she swims behind with her head held low,
Ah, so chastened, so gray, so low,
Low, low,
And the ripples kissing her throat.

AMY S. JENNINGS.

TAPESTRY

THE night is paved with purple. Winds have torn
The arras of the sunset and laid bare
A waste of wintry stars, astonished there,
And the recumbent moon's up-tilted horn.
From windows of desire and guarded doors
That open in this fortalice of dust
We hear the sound of constant waters thrust
Back from the ramparts of remoter shores.

Like statues frozen in a niche we stand,
Hearing the surf that beats through endless time
On seacoasts even the sails of Argos passed.
Here are all houses ever built on sand;
False beacon and mirage, and bells that chime,
Calling Ulysses, bound against the mast.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS.

ASTROLOGY

WITH half the glittering heavens on his back,
He made a cheerful compromise with earth,
Holding no grudge against the zodiac
For having blazoned Virgo at his birth.
Out of a sky no longer comet-crossed
Or clogged with stars, he said, would come a sign;
And while he waited Life might well be lost,
Though all the kindlier planets were in trine.

Choosing between the jewel and the toad,
He somehow paltered, and we found a nook
In Time and Space for his enforced abode,
Growing accustomed to his absent look—
His anxiously apocalyptic air
Of seeming to be neither here nor there.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS.

REALITY

DOWN the world, with feet of clay,
Came the first man that first day;
The first man in his stature whole,
Out of his eyes there looked a soul.

Out of his head and heart and arms
Came brave motions, potent charms;
He looked up and he looked round,
He looked long upon the ground.

Said the first man to the tree,
"Today you have been given to me."
Said the first man to the sky,
"Strange, you are not very high."

He swam the river, killed the beast,
Struck out fire and made his feast;
His pillow and his roof were rock,
He shaped dirt for a drinking crock.

Arrows from the sapling came
And flew until the world was tame.
The first man mocked the morning sun,
"Look," he cried, "what I have done!

"I make the grain grow for my bread,
I make the leaves grow for my bed;
I am a king most certainly,
I am king of all I see!"

Then the light upon the hill
Went out; the sullen air was still,
The darkness grew too thick for breath,
And a voice said, "This is death."

The stillness ended at the sound;
The trees lashed wildly and the ground
Shook till the first man could not stand;
He lay and shook upon the land.

He heard the waters pound the shore,
The rivers broke their banks and tore
Rocks like rafts from their solid base;
The first man bowed his coward face.

Terrible and more terrible still
Shrieked the wind from hill to hill.
Endless seemed that devil's strife,
Then a voice said, "This is life."

The wind went down, a star returned,
Green, then red, the East-rim burned;
The sky, the earth, his sight were strange,
All about was wreck and change.

The first man raised his stricken head,
He knew not yet if he was dead;
He felt his heart beat with his hand,
He touched the hard, subsiding land.

Out of the flying mist he saw
Green and red on dew and shaw—
Green and red and he were one,
And the first man thanked the sun.

Suddenly, oh suddenly,
The light came back on range and tree,
Joyous tree and dewy range—
The first man wondered at the change.

Suddenly, oh suddenly,
The first man saw reality.
Life and death and he were one
With the violence of the sun.

ORRICK JOHNS.

INTERIOR

I WONDERED if I were a chair myself,
Or perhaps just a serape
Thrown down carelessly,
Dragging on the floor.

I wasn't thinking, only sitting,
And there seemed no difference
Between me and the table.
Except that the table had four legs
Browner than my two,
And the table's face
Reflected the light
More vividly than mine.
The little carving on the wooden stand
Was more beautiful than I am,
And the painting on the wall
Was more alive,
And the book beside me
Was more intelligent,
And the electric light brighter;
And the pillow, and the piano,
And the paper-weight,
And the flowers in the vase,
And the rugs—
Everything was more something.
Surely the curtains at the window
Can see the moon rise,
And an automobile

With green eyelids
Come up the street,
And Mars approaching
With a bloody twinkle.

Surely the piano can remember
The girl with auburn hair
Who played the tune she said
Was popular in St. Louis.
And what chair could forget
That a fat man sat upon it
Through an evening?

Yes, I must be a chair,
Or a serape, or a rug.
I seem to remember
The nail the carpenter used
To mend my broken arm;
And I can recall the hollow shock
Each time the weaver
Put his foot upon the pedal
Of his loom repairing me.
But at the same time
I feel the pleasant thrill
Of a girl shaking me
In the sunlight.
And all the while I know
That I am nothing in the room
But all of it;
That I am here not only now

But have always been here.
I am confused and timeless:
Is this a pelado's poor adobe,
Or has an artist
Remodelled it into a studio?
Do I see a barren cot
In that corner instead of cushions and a couch?
Or is this tomorrow
Instead of yesterday?

I seem to have sat here a hundred years,
Waiting for an explanation of it all.
And yet I came in only an hour ago
To sit quietly
And to be alone . . .

WILLARD JOHNSON.

THE CRANE IN BLOOMSBURY

MAN's god to see, backwards I bent my head,
Like any saint intent upon his vision.
There, dark against the clouds, the monster raised
Colossal arms, and moved with slow decision
Half over heaven. Yet no one seemed amazed,
No one fell prostrate, worshiping his power;
But midget men, commanding, while I gazed
Moved their weak arms, and brought the god's arms
lower.

Roared all around me motor evidence
Of our assault upon life's brevity:
Men hurried as though death were at their heels,
And would not leave their thoughts alone, lest he
Should gain upon them. So they rushed on wheels
From door to door, filling the moments out
With twice each moment's labor—though there
steals
Only behind more haste a heavier doubt.

And from the ground an exhalation came,
Even in the breath of stone and iron streets,
The breath of Autumn, earthy from the leaves
Fallen beneath the trees—such breath as meets
An idle harvester when all the sheaves

Are carried, or some ploughboy wandering home,
Who, missing the late swallow from his eaves,
In darkening silence listens, and is dumb.

FRANK KENDON.

TOBACCO SMOKE

THIS time I've sent her off on a French steamer,
The kind to lull awhile a helpless dreamer;
Cushioned with idleness, action a slave
To what the ether wills, or what the wave;
Quite lively too and furnished with narcotics,
The bits of novelty that soothe neurotics
Against the scourge that whips and drives them
frantic:

This phantom life of hers, blindly romantic,
Pursuing and pursued by one affection
Of endless and of hopeless introspection.

A childish game of hide and seek grown tragic,
A looking glass distorting her with magic:
The one that shuts her off from seeing me,
The one that holds my love from freeing me
Of each and every effort every day
To play for her the peerless popinjay.
A man can't go on swinging like an ape,
Gyrate to dizzy breezes, change his shape,
And counterfeit all lovers if he can,
Each one a variation and a man.

You think there's nothing in this, and you smile?
You'd better fill your pipe again and I'll
Set up a final hurdle to beguile
Your humor—make it jump a broader stile.
I'm muddled, so you'll have to help me through
By listening the way you always do.

I saw her off last night. Do you suppose
She had some stray affection to disclose?
No, something had to tantalize her mind
I must be sure not to forget, a kind
Of final errand she'd not had a chance
To attend to—"There's a dear, while I'm in
France—"

And there's the mischief too, for she'll repine
If I'm remiss; she'll be the one to whine
And whimper—not to a fellow like you;
She doesn't need a soul to see her through
So long as she has me to be them all:
Husband and friend, lover and man, in thrall,
Each variation tenderly the tool
For that hurt little heart of hers to rule.
A dear quaint letter, daintily contrived,
Will question what it was could have connived
With me; or was her "one last small request
So small I must have thought it but a jest?"
Bantering and cajoling me, her scrawl
Makes all the dupe return and busily crawl
Back to her feet; and though I know by heart
Her sleight of hand, so obvious the art,
Like some short-sighted youth I read her letter
And run and get the thing she wants, and better.

I won't say that she's conscious I'm a fool;
Nor is she calculating as a rule;
She's much too innocent to be considerate—
I'd never move an inch were she deliberate.

One can't help feeling it's a deep, chronic
Disease that keeps her helplessness despotic;
And probe or wait for the least hopeful sign
Hinting a cure (with other hands than mine).

When I first saw the girl, she was a child;
One couldn't court her then, one used a mild
Wakeful prayerful sort of watchfulness
Composed of one long fatherly caress:
One used it then, one used it later; now,
Abuse has made the habit stay somehow.
The fault, you see, is mine, for I have toiled
To spoil the child in her and keep her spoiled
By letting her depend her independence
On me, without the need of some repentance
To nurture sudden traits of conscience in her.
Now might not one assume that I'm the sinner?

And one might ask: "What can it be you're losing,
Since what you haven't got is your own choosing,
And what you still might find you throw away
By putting it on the wind to blow away?
Though you put her there before, and she returned,
What did you gain thereby, what have you learned?
You were so glad to have her near the fire,
You even neglected wholly to inquire
What had happened to her in this weird game.
In fact, you found the woman quite the same
After she saw you, greeted you and kissed you,
Told you right off how terribly she'd missed you.

She did, with being constantly in trouble,
Bursting against discomfort like a bubble,
Not knowing where to turn or how to land,
And growing paler longing for a hand—
Not one of theirs, but one of yours to come
And lift her gently down again and home.
If she should meet a man this time, a lover,
Do you believe you two would then recover?"

No need to try that, she tried that before:
They dallied about, were queer and came no more—
Queer was the word she used against them all.
Clearly they must have seen about them crawl
The ghosts of me in each of my disguises,
The sight of which unmasked her of surprises.
The girl in her expected the quintessence
Of what she'd always had—my adolescence.
Foreigners raised their brows, politely quit,
And later doubtless spiced their tales with wit.
In season, she'll come back across the puddle
And wave to me to wade out to the muddle,
Wherein I'm quite immersed as soon as she
Is close enough for me once more to see
We cannot live without each other far,
Nor even exist with both of us too near.
And so I let her let me send her off,
And grope alone for ways to mend our love.

I might see what to do if I were clearer,
If I were not so everlasting near her.

I'm talkative now, but when I want a word
To touch her presence, turn her around—absurd
How I dodder along, procrastinate
And lose the moment in a silent fate.
A playful approach would do, an indirect
Method of teasing her to be circumspect.
Alas, one might as well address a cloud;
She is just as remote from earth, as proud
And sensitive—so easy to dissolve,
I have to stay below with my resolve.
She has a way, when trouble's in the air,
Of trembling, concentrating in a stare,
Huddling together, crumbling in my arm,
Where there's a cloud to shield the cloud from
 harm.
She's made of tiny fibres, nerves and veins
Too small to see but large enough for rains.

I might see what to do if it were smoke,
If I could watch it leave our pipes, a joke
So long as I have you to smile at it,
And shake your tranquil head a while at it.
But when I have to leave this room behind
And trek back to the rooms no longer kind,
And find familiar things familiarly
In places where she left them, each one the
Remainder and reminder, then my head
Is little use to me except in bed.
And even there, there's no real compensation,
Never a glimpse of healing revelation.

The malady I have feels ages deep—
No remedy can cure, not even sleep.

Some morning when I wake and think I'm dead
I'm sure I'll be alive and still in bed.
One would suspect some night I might retreat
Behind a measure that could bring defeat
To the boomerang that haunts me like a thief.
I might attempt it if it brought relief
To her as well as me. But while there's doubt
Of that, and knowledge she can't do without
What I am to her, and a hope I'll be still more
Accompanying her when she comes in the door
With that trouble in her eyes I can't evade—
Like a thing seeking protection in the shade
It cannot see its way about in—why,
There we are again, and there am I,
Too much afraid for her to be afraid
Of anything else: and thus life goes ahead.

You grin at this? And I can feel a smile
Begin to creep. And so—good night—a while.

ALFRED KREYMBORG.

BLINDMAN

I HEARD one praise his love
In a voice that shook
With passionate exaltation of
Her brow and look.

Dull to my sight, to my heart,
I saw his love pass by;
Nor knew if he were blind
Or I.

MUNA LEE.

PASSER-BY

HE jostled through the crowded train,
So grey of face,
One glance showed death was following him
Swift pace for pace.

Oh, Sun, be quick! shine on him now!
Be warm! be kind!
Another week you'll search for him—
Search, and not find.

MAY LEWIS.

“IT IS THE TRUE STAR”

I WILL remember this night. So long as mind
Endures to captain against the vandal Doom
Her forlorn hopes—nerve, blood and bone de-
signed

After death's image, let me remember this night.

There were daffodils at one corner of my room
Poised in a golden trance, and the four white-
Panelled walls made cosmos in miniature
Serene as a dewdrop or a Chinese poem,
And I its essence and demiurge. So pure
A oneness (I thought) is every man. No stir
From the street breaks on his Self, a play without
proem

Or epilogue, dreamed in the theatre
He calls his life; being actor and audience
To the last posture of decay he claps,
Hisses yawns at himself.

But then, what sense

Have they the pioneer-minded, the rebel-hearted,
If a man's fulfilment rest on no "perhaps"
Outside him? They are bell-buoys adrift from
their charted

Safe shallows, sagging inanely through a sea
That yerks them up to meaningless stars, clanging,
Clanging for Eldorado, dementedly.

Monad or Nomad? What difference, since either
state

Binds us with a law, each soul from each estrang-
ing,

To be thus terribly masters of our fate?

And I was sickened by this philosophy
That would benight each man in a six-foot cell,
Proud Playboy of his own complacency.

So I opened the window and put out my head,
Thought's fog, portentous pachyderm, to dispel.
(“The monad has no windows,” Leibnitz said.)

Firm stood the moon, and all the sky marched on
Rank after rank of cloud in ragged battalions
Before its face: as though Napoleon,
The squat dynamic man, straddling the snow
Watched while his glorious tatterdemalions
Trailed home and left his hope-blood at Moscow.
Then, lapped in that magnificence, I knew
Suddenly how all creatures from one source
Take breath and purpose, and again renew
It with their greatness. How the very star
That held Columbus to his homeric course
Waned on the waters around St. Helena.

“This star that constant is for our possession,
Find we its gleam amid whatever skies—
In valour's dayspring or the dry noontide passion
To probe beneath life's semblances, or drowned
In the deep-sea midnight of a woman's eyes:
This star, whose mere reflection will astound
Us out of false content, by its possessing
Mates every true possessor; and so fills

Each creature with Creation, itself amassing
From men the stuff of Godhead." . . .
As I spoke,
Quietly like a clump of daffodils
Out of the night grew dawn, and sparrows awoke.

CECIL DAY LEWIS.

AN ABANDONED TOW-PATH

IN idle dalliance now it welcomes weeds
Grasshoppers dance along its unused ways;
A rainbow blur of flowers tells of seeds
The wind had caught in care-free yesterdays.
And resting close beside it, almost dry,
A greenish ghost of what was once a stream
Sags low within its muddy bed, as lie
The broken things whose life is but a dream.

IN memory alone it suffers pain:
Informal insect choirs and elfin brass
Intone a dirge for all who wax and wane,
A requiem for all who thrive and pass.
Sometimes, beneath the moon, it wakes to see
The rotted locks draw open noiselessly.

ELIAS LIEBERMAN.

THE LAKE

SHE lies among the mountains in a little place
Roomy for her, and dreaming in green trees
Presses her waters through a grassy wood.
The soft sand bears her burden; in her dreams
She sings to the sand a melody, thinking so
To make a gift to it for its own labouring.
Far beyond her knowledge in the wood
Stand the grey pines that like a mountain move,
Twisting the fresh wind in their mighty tops.
And these untremblingly she pictures in her eyes.
Even the unclad peaks that strike the tender sky,
These also looks she on,
And rippling a new laughter to the wind
Holds them within her, these to share her sleep.
Daylight and Air, she dreams, come willingly to her
In a blue radiance like a weft of sky:
So to the unconquered Sun looks up,
Lifts all her fairy strength and takes his gold—
In an enchantment weaving in the gold
To an eye of the bluest sea, to a new-born opal.

This to eternity:

Not in her dreams beyond the scented fields
Where flow her waters in a stream through flowers—
Not in her dreams the soft sand shallowing,
The hard fields breaking to sharp darts of earth
Thrust piteously far out upon a rocky wall
Shapeless, unspacious, nipped between the land,

Torn like a wound between.
Oh, not in her dream the little lake
Sees such a rift of peace!
Her waters bent in tumult and grey pines
Scarring her tortured foam, and boulders torn
Out of the rocky earth with insane action.
Beating the long way through, beating the blind
 crushed gorge,
Flung height to height, bruising her frail bright
 foam
And no light there—no light in its sweet time,
No morning coming early, waxing into noon
In secure pleasing order.
Here dark is light, here day is dark,
Here is no day, no moon, no stars, no sun.
But thousand moons or thousand stars, or Sun
Split monstrously. . . .
Oh, not in her dreams the little lake
Sees this her darkness!
Nor yet upon a night when on her shines
The small moon loving her, sees she in any dream
Her waters strong and stronger,
All her wide tide stronger,
Thrusting the rough pines under,
Riding the mute earth over
Smooth as a storm when its thunder
Is dumb, is not voiced, but keeping
Till the dark cracks asunder.
Oh, stilly she rides, and rides over!
Brooding the grey rocks stand up amazed,

Cut with a sword, with a sword up-raised.
Glitters the black of her passing, the Sun
Strains his gold beams on the earth far over,
Bids it fall back, make a path; ever stronger
Comes her long pitiless tide . . . and after
Daylight and Air have played with her sing
Of the strength of her coming, and merrily bring
New garlands of green on their wings:
New garlands of green for the River,
Praising, obeying the River!

ENA LIMEBEER.

IN A POWDER CLOSET

(Early Eighteenth Century)

MY very excellent young person,
Since Fate has destined you to play the rôle of
 coiffeur,
You will permit that I admire your quite unsur-
 passed skill,
Together with your polished, if a trifle over-
 pronounced, manners,
Without by an inch lessening the distance
Which the hazard of birth and the artifice of custom
Have placed between us.
My mirror tells me that you are a personable man;
But, indeed, it is my own image in this same mirror
Which most occupies my attention.
That such a subject as I offer
Engages you to put forth your best efforts
Is only natural;
That I should remain indifferent is equally so.
Be satisfied that the exigencies of your profession
Admit you to privileges from which a more exalted
 station would exclude you.
My maid will, I am sure, be most happy to accom-
 modate herself to your wishes,
She is a worthy girl and entertains a not unjusti-
 fiable belief in my continued recognition of
 her services.
The spray of heliotrope is well placed.

Do you think a patch just here—at the corner of
the eye?

Ah, yes. It adds perceptibly.

You are, Sir, a consummate artist.

To-morrow at four I shall expect you.

AMY LOWELL.

TOWARD A ROMANTIC REVIVAL

WE too, we too descending once again
The hills of our own land, we too have heard
Far off—Ah que ce cor a longue haleine—
The horn of Roland in the passages of Spain,
The first, the second blast, the failing third,
And with the third turned back and climbed once
more

The steep road southward, and heard faint the sound
Of swords, of horses, the disastrous war,
And crossed the dark defile at last, and found
At Ronçevaux, upon the darkening plain
The dead against the dead and on the silent ground
The silent slain.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH.

ELEVEN SAVED

THE saved came from the surf like men new born,
Crawling and staggering, their clothes in strips,
Their eyes agape with fear, their bodies torn,
With blood and sea-weed dark about their lips.

But when they reached the inn they wrung their
coats,
Grinned each at other for their sad array;
And coughed and spat the water from their throats,
As though they spat the adventure clean away.

RUTH MANNING-SANDERS.

CAPE ST. VINCENT

February 14th, 1797.

BARELY twenty sail
And a lawless crew at that,
(Might have graced a yardarm at the Nore)
Chanced it in a gale,
And they laid the Dons out flat,
Made a fine old shambles of some thirty
Ships or more.

Men with ready lips
For a bottle or a wench,
Swift to strike and follow up the blow;
Big or little ships,
To the Spanish or the French
Hell could not have bettered them a
Hundred years ago.

What a mint of stuff
You can press from any street,
Fit and fresh for any brawl or breeze,
Battle-bred and tough
For the making of a fleet,
Such a fleet as Jervis took to tidy up
The seas!

Lyme Regis.

G. D. MARTINEAU.

FROM "MORE LICHEE-NUT POEMS"

I

On Contentment

FIRST wife dead, second wife gone to China.
No children, no house, only these little rooms,
This stove, couch, bowl and spoon and image of
 Buddha.
But a little silver laid away, and food enough;
Mind at rest, or filled with good thoughts,
And long talks with Yang Chung every day.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS.

FOR INSTANCE

Vegetables
and jewelry, rightly displayed,
have an equal amount of fascination.

Carrots, for instance,
piled—
ferntops, bodies, and hair roots
so bound together in bunches—
bunches laid in rows
of oblong heaps with magnitude,
are sufficient to arrest any seeing eye.

Cabbages with a purplish tinge,
when of grandeur, with widespread petals,
as they rest in heaps
catching the dawn's first filtering of sunlight,
compare satisfyingly with roses enmassed,
with orchids, sunflowers, tulips,
or variegated flowers
extravagantly scattered.

While as to onions,
little can excel their decorative effect
when green tubes, white bulbs, and grey hair roots
rest in well arranged, paralleled piles
about which buxom women congregate,
laughing and chattering in wholesome vulgarity.

Crispness,
a cool indifference to the gash of knives,
to the crush of kind,
or to any destiny whatsoever,
has granted the vegetables an arrogance of identity
one would be foolhardy to strive after
with heated impressionable imagination.

Vegetables,
given their color,
scent and freshness,
too easily attain a cool supremacy of being
for our fumbling competition.

ROBERT MCALMON.

NO HOOVES, NO HORNS

I WAS no devil, pray remember.

Flesh of Adam was my disease.

And we go always breaking our hearts, lady.

The road is rugged in these countries.

Pain came to you over my sorrow.

I first traveled that thorny way.

And other pilgrims are torn on the brambles,

And we no more than they.

JOHN McCLURE.

AND THE RIVERS RUN SOUTH

RIVERS run south in America—
From the north, and the east, and the west.
Always I must tell you of south-running valleys,
Telling these, I give you my country.

The Arkansas, James, Colorado,
I give you my country exulting,
I give you no couplets.
Can you gather the storm in a raindrop,
The night in a bird-shadow over the noon?
Then neither can you fondle America,
Tied and beribboned in a sonnet.
Things held in the left hand,
Measured with the right hand,
Are things that are dead,
And our country—Ah God, how it lives!
The joy of our rivers running south,
Our river Mississippi, our broad-bosomed father,
Searching and knowing
The length and the span of our being!

I remember looking out from our school,
Looking down a long street with its elms,
And the street went down to a river;
I picked my first violets close to this river,
I saw death the first time, by this river.
I remember a plow taken down from a wagon,
And the fields that began at our doorstep;

I would watch them turned over into a soft breath-
ing darkness,
Dark like the river that ran just beyond them;
Then I would stand guard knowing pain for them,
I would scream for intruders across them,
For they were my own, my America;
I was their lover, I and the river.
And I would run over these fields in the night,
Sinking down in the cool clinging blackness
While the moon would look down at me stumbling,
Lost in my prayers:
“My country, my country.”
What squaws stooped along with me then,
Up from the river,
Their hands full of seeds,
Mumbling “America”?
What Braves slog-slogged at the fieldside,
Slogged their foot and thigh rhythm, drum rhythm,
Thumping “America”?
I would fall, and my hands full of earth,
I would run to the house and the fattening lilacs,
The cherry trees waiting and the apples;
There with the moonlight, the shadows,
The music of the river within me,
I would know my America.

Everywhere, always,
I go over rivers—
Down the night-trodden coolness of morning,

Yellow hands of the willows
Bending the winter to April;
Up the thin Autumn dusk,
Dead leaves ticking
The last thin breaths of October.

I hear freights in the night
Pushing the darkness
Up hill and down hill, and over the rivers,
Into stations of dawn.
I know liners tied to wet wharves,
Jostling America,
My country suckling her harbors at the flow of her
rivers,
Holding her children,
Holding tomorrow.

Have you gone down the nights on the Mississippi
River?
Down the Missouri to the meeting of the waters?
Down the Ohio?
Missouri, Missouri,
What sound and roar of south-pouring water,
Snatching the Yellowstone up from Wyoming,
And across Montana, down through the wheat.
Ohio, Ohio, river running over,
Black coal and iron:
Mississippi, Father Mississippi,
Side-wheeler, raft and canoe,
Oh hug the plantation and hold the cotton,

Down the nights and down the days,
Down our America
Rock, and root, and blossom.

Brown hills, thumbs of American mountains—
I see the wild geese flying over,
Writing high the first letter of April,
And I hear them again going back;
The geese go north and the geese return,
But always our rivers run south.

Now I listen to axes in the night,
(Who can hear axes at night without wincing?)
I hear the trees going over,
The fall of old years going down.
I hear hammers in the night,
Riveters' hammers,
I see the quick tossing of flame,
The weaving, the binding, and the growth.
In May are the tulips,
Slow loosening of petals from a center;
And in May the top-story derricks
Lift petals of stone up the mornings.
And the rivers run south in America,
Susquehanna, Savannah,
Merrimac, Red, Alabama.

A walking of many great people, my country,
These men and these women, these lovers and
children.

I see them by day in the fields
With the sowing, the reaping, the building
I see them at night in the cities,
With the lights and the smoke blowing over the
lights.

In the morning they go, and the noon,
Down the afternoon slant to the nights,
While the statesmen stand in their park-niches.
(Statesmen of stone and of bronze,
Long ago did they lean over bridges and listen to
the water,
Water running south?)

Oh listen, my country, to the rivers,
Rivers telling of the rain,
The rain at our roots,
Our roots lying south with our rivers,
The rain like our prayers, like our laughter,
Molding yesterday's dust
Into loam for more and more growing.
Lean right or lean left, they always run south at the
end;
They tell you that nothing takes God in an unbend-
ing line,
Each tower, each prayer,
Has its curves of remembering, its fear, and its
laughter.
Oh listen my country,
While the rivers run south—
Do you hear them?

With my right hand, my left hand,
I may give you the moon, I may give you the
lilacs—
But always I give you America,
My country, and her rivers running south.

F. R. McCREARY.

REGATTA

BEATTIE is finding life a perfect scream, on your
right hand;

And Mab is finding life a perfect scream, on your
left hand.

Beattie is tilting her round chin at you, provoca-
tively;

And Mab is tilting her round breasts at you, pro-
vocatively.

Life is a giggle for Mab;

And life is a giggle for Beattie;

And both of them are convinced that life is a giggle
For you.

And you, whose eyes with so little stirring
Could become two deep-moved pools of pain,

You, young, and virgin, and virile,

Unplumbable by Beattie,

Unplumbable by Mab—

Will Beattie, ruffling the as yet calm surface of your
boyish serenity,

Capsize the rich and secret treasure that she will
never envisage,

Sinking it for ever in depths whose existence she
will never guess?

Or will it be Mab's dabbling fingers that will swamp
your bright treasure-ship?

Beautiful and vulnerable boy,

Your beauty and your vulnerability

Stir me, impotent and aghast,
With a wounding and unutterable
Compassion.

SUSAN MILES.

HOW BEAUTY CAME

NOT through the massive sun-washed doors,
Flung wide in the noisy house of the mind,
To these and the newly varnished floors
Her gypsy eyes were blind.

The heart that we rigged as a cloister-garden,
With young wild flowers to feast her eyes,
She passed, like a restless prison-warden
When dusk on the cell-tier dies.

The lighted towers of sense and sight
Grew lonely straining for her face
In vain, we borrowed music's might
To lure her from her hiding place.

But when each soul was scoured with flame,
And every heart by sorrow swept,
Then, cold and naked, Beauty came
Into our house and wept.

J. CORSON MILLER.

GREAT DISTANCE

How can you be so far away?
When I have been in pain before
I've found you standing just outside
My body's door,
In patient silence waiting there,
That I might feel your spirit near.

But now, with every breath I take,
It seems that you have farther gone,
And I become more wide awake,
And more alone.
In all this world there is no light;
No open doorway here to-night.

I lay my body on the bed,
And cross my arms, and think of death,
And think, nine hundred miles away,
You draw calm breath.
At last, imagination through
That distance reaches out to you.

Now you are leaning on your hand,
And staring at an empty book.
You raise your eyes; you understand:
I feel your look
Pierce through me. In this foreign place
You reach me, and I know your face.

I swear that then our hands did touch,
And all my fainting pain is gone;
I know that you did touch my hand.
Each is alone.
Yet loneliness begins to seem
Like sleep, and will become a dream.

HAROLD MONRO.

THE SCOURGE

LOVE is not velvet of a courteous shade
To put a garment on my nakedness
And fool me into thinking I was made
For the assurance of a solar dress.
The love I know is not a silken thing
Spun out of little hungers and a lie;
It does not compliment my soul, nor cling
As velvet clings to arm and breast and thigh.

Love can be harsh as any hairy mesh
That monks endure beneath their cassock coats
To draw the blood from their too-earthly flesh—
The hair of horses and the hair of goats.
Tonight against my ribs I feel the curt
And pre-Elizabethan horse-hair shirt!

VIRGINIA MOORE.

DOG

A COOL wet nose that searches for your hand;
The venture of a tongue that asks: "Why linger?"
A question that is also a command
Worried by gentle teeth on captured finger;
A begging paw to conquer with its charm,
Enslavement to a personal appeal;
A leap ahead that seems to say: "What harm
To follow me no matter how you feel?"
A pause, a quick discarding of such means
Of drawing lazy humans out of doors;
A challenge, an insistency that seams
A brow with ancient care—a gaze that scores
A victory demanded by the whole
Weight and pressure of a brown-eyed soul.

CHARLES R. MURPHY.

LEADED GLASS SAINT

You shaped those colored bits—the tales they spun
Around your life—and joined them with such skill
That there evolved with glassy fringe and frill
Your saintly pattern marvelously done.
And thus, for all your checkered life, you won
His soul, and did not rest in quiet until
He raised you up and framed you in to fill
His Gothic window opening to the sun.

But you, resorting to the blind device
As old as woman, set his house aflame.
How you glowed up! But in that glow, alas,
The lead that joined you melted down like ice;
And you, collapsing in the window frame,
Fell out a little heap of broken glass.

ISRAEL NEWMAN.

LOVE

THE girl they loved walked in through the door
As dead as a valley in autumn,
And neither turned his head her way
Nor asked of her why she had sought him;
But they stared at the embers, and neither said,
"She is standing behind us that is dead!"

Though a moment before one had whispered, "My
friend!"

And his friend, "My more than brother,
We alone shall see that face to the end
With the smile that she gave no other,"
Neither cried out, "Behind my chair
She stands and her hands are above my hair!"

Though one had said, "There is none but you,
Since Heaven has chosen and blest us,
And we alone in the skeleton hands
Could know the hands that caressed us,"
Neither said, "Welcome!" neither sought
To take the hand that she stretched out.

They did not doubt that she was there
Like a perished sky in the autumn,
So still they grew, so cold their hearts—
Grudging the hope she had brought him,
Each waited as if turned to stone
To feel her hands, to taste alone
The triumph in his flesh and bone.

FRANK O'CONNOR.

TIME HAS A WAY

TIME has a way with flesh that is more cruel
Than any ruin it may work on stone.
Time is a fire, and craves no sweeter fuel
Than lissom limb, clean blood, and virile bone.
You, who today are wind and bloom, tomorrow
Will be a dismal and decrepit thing;
And I—too gouty and infirm for sorrow
That hands no longer burn or warm lips cling.

Oh, grant me sorcery of words to fashion
A crypt of song to guard your loveliness,
Where you may come, some drear day when our
 passion
Has turned to kindness, or something less,
And muse—half wistful, half incredulous:
“Was I so fair, and did he love me—thus!”

TED OLSON.

YOUNG ICARUS

THROUGHOUT the island of the minotaur
Sleep lay on every leaf.
The sea was but a thin green bar
Strewn with a raveled grain, a sheaf
Of glinting morning gold.

Young Icarus, with fingers whittled cold,
Raised up an arc of feather,
And Dædalus, with fingers colder,
Fastened the wings upon his son together,
And blessed each burdened shoulder.

The dawn slid in upon the sea and foamed
Against the bouldered dark,
And up the gloom an eagle roamed,
Screaming at lowered stars, while winged, stark
Lithe Icarus took heed:

“Not high nor low, but middle, is our need.
Stay between cloud and cloud . . .”
But suddenly dark Dædalus, amazed,
Opened his wings and with a warning loud
Cried to a light that blazed.

Young Icarus aloft, a crystal spear,
Shattered the pallid hour.
The roaming eagle shied in fear
And spiraled downward, outward from a shower
Of splinter-laden light.

And then, upon the pinnacle of sight,
 A spark shot fire and broke,
And down the zenith's azure wall
 Careened an arrow with a head of smoke
That slanted in the fall.

Old Dædalus flung out his knotted arms,
 But far away was he
From where, amid the gull-alarms,
 The body of his son unlocked the sea
With flame-surrendered wings.

Old Dædalus flew on . . . and many things
 He gave the children of his land
Before the distant waves had spun
 A covering of shell and weed and sand
For what he gave the sun.

GEORGE O'NEIL.

DECEIVERS EVER

THE air vibrates and shines,
The wind whistles a tune,
Clouds are creamy as curds,
Birds will be singing soon;
But the songs of larks in the air
Were dead music if she
Of the buttercup-yellow hair
Were cold in a glance to me.
If she were not in the wet corn
At morn by the grassy dún
The boon I would crave from God
Were sods for my roof-tree soon.

The calm follows the storm
That stripped my soul bare.
Housed in the branching hair
Of her I name no more
Limb-warm
With love's soft raiment o'er
Head and bosom and heart
I swore,
I swore by the grace God gave her,
I swore by her candle-bright hands
That the mortars of God's thunder
That rive the hills asunder
Should scathless leave the wonder
Of loves untorn apart.

I think it was a week ago
She gave her mouth to Maurice Keogh.

The calm follows the storm,
The flame kisses the stone;
Let the winds moan,
My feet in the ashes are warm.

HUGH ORANGE.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

HERE to the leisured side of life,
Remote from traffic, free from strife,
A cul-de-sac, a sanctuary
Where old quaint customs creep to die
And only ancient memories stir,
At evening comes the lamplighter,
With measured steps, without a sound,
He treads the unalterable round;
Soundlessly touching one by one
The waiting posts, that stand to take
The faint blue bubbles in his wake;
And when the night begins to wane,
He comes to take them back again,
Before the chilly dawn can blight
The delicate frail buds of light.

SEUMAS O'SULLIVAN.

THETIS AND THE AUNTS

THREE old cats of covert claw
Sitting round the parlour fire:
What they thought of what they saw
Made the walls perspire.
In the morning they will waken
(Drear the day and dawn forsaken)
With Rebuke distilled by gallons
And acutely tingling talons.

.
Thetis, only just sixteen,
Posing to the looking-glass
Doesn't—yet—know she was seen
("Nothing on!" "The brazen lass!")

On her left, a candle, warm;
On her right, a moonray, cold;
Her dim lily-slender form
Half in silver, half in gold.

Moonray thought: "'Tis Dian, sped
Before me to receive me home"!
Candle thought: "'Tis Psyche fled
From Venus and the wrath to come"!

Mirror mused: "My well of Truth
Brims with an immortal sign:
All of Beauty, all of Youth,
One eternal moment—mine"!

Old jute carpet felt like tears
Where her flitting shadow fell,
Where her feet caressed his years:
"I was young," he thought, "as well."

Old lace curtain held his breath,
Laying the print of flowers tied
With ribbon, like a bridal wreath,
Motionless against her side.

Tinsel text above her bed
Bloomed a rose without a thorn:
"GOD IS LOVE." Its fragrance shed:
"Christ was of a maiden born."

Tumbled shift across her chair
Clasped the ghost of warmth, and slept;
Dreamed her guileless bosom there,
Heard the happy heart that leapt.

Thetis thought (White hip out-thrust,
Arm upraised, bright cheek on shoulder)
"Rather nice! I hope I'm just
A shade less skinny when I'm older.

"In two more years I'll be eighteen—
I shall always bob my hair . . .
I'm pinky where my strings have been—
I rather like that bit just there. . . .

"Greek girls ran about like this!

Somewhat awful! All the same
There's a frightful lot we miss—

Modern life's a bit too tame. . . .

"Fancy Auntie Dot like me!

Oh! It's hateful growing old—
Grey and deaf and crotchety—

Dead and buried . . . ugh! I'm cold."

Then she pirouetted, twice;

Smiled at herself and kissed one arm—
"Hush"! She thrilled like fire in ice!

"Door clicked! . . . Nothing . . . False alarm."

.

Three old cats of cunning claw

Sitting round the parlour fire:

What they thought of what they saw

Turned their whiskers wire.

Thetis, in the morn will waken

(Or I'm very much mistaken)

To a discourse on Divinity

Mewed *crescendo* by the Trinity.

KARL PARSONS.

HISTORY OF TWO SIMPLE LOVERS

FULL of her long white arms and milky skin
He had a thousand times remembered sin.
Alone in the press of people travelled he,
Minding her jacinth and myrrh and ivory.

Mouth he remembered: the quaint orifice
From whence came heat that flamed upon the kiss,
Till cold words came down spiral from the head,
Grey doves from the officious tower illsped.

Body: it was a white field ready for love.
On her body's field, with the gaunt tower above,
The lilies grew, beseeching him to take,
If he would pluck and wear them, bruise and break.

Eyes talking: Never mind the cruel words,
Embrace my flowers but not embrace the swords.
But what they said, the doves came straightway
flying
And unsaid: Honor, Honor, they kept crying.

Importunate her doves. Too pure, too wise,
Clambering on his shoulder, saying, Arise,
Leave me now, and never let us meet,
Eternal distance now command thy feet.

Predicament indeed, which thus discovers
Honor among thieves, Honor between lovers.
Of such a little word is Honor, they feel!
But the grey word is between them cold as steel.

At length I saw these lovers fully were come
Into their torture of equilibrium:
Dreadfully had forsworn each other, and yet
They were bound each to each, and they did not
forget.

The beauty of their bodies was the bond
Which these incarnate might not pass beyond;
Invincible proud Honor was the bar
Which made them not come closer but stay far.

And rigid as two painful stars, and twirled
About the clustered night their prison world,
They burned with fierce love always to come near,
But Honor beat them back and kept them clear.

Ah the strict lovers, they are ruined now!
I cried in anger. But with puddled brow
Devising for those gibbeted and brave
Came I descanting: Man, what would you have?

For spin your period out, and draw your breath,
A kinder saeculum begins with Death.
Would you ascend to Heaven and bodiless dwell?
Or take your bodies honorless to Hell?

In Heaven you have heard no marriage is,
No white flesh tinder to your lecheries,
Your male and female tissue, sweetly shaped,
Sublimed away, and furious blood escaped;

Great lovers lie in Hell, the stubborn ones
Infatuate of the flesh upon the bones;
Stuprate, they rend each other when they kiss,
The pieces kiss again—no end to this.

But still I watched them spinning, orbited nice.
Their flames were no more radiant than their ice.
I dug in the quiet earth and wrought the tomb
And made these lines to memorize the doom:

Equilibrists lie here; stranger, tread light;
Close but untouching in each other's sight;
Mouldered the lips and ashy the tall skull,
Let them lie perilous and beautiful.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

LADY LOST

THIS morning, flew up the lane
A timid lady bird to our birdbath
And eyed her image dolefully as death;
This afternoon, knocked on our windowpane
To be let in from the rain.

And when I caught her eye
She looked aside, but at the clapping thunder
And sight of the whole earth blazing up like tind
Looked in on us again most miserably,
Indeed as if she would cry.

So I will go out into the park and say,
“Who has lost a delicate brown-eyed lady
In the West End Section? Or has anybody
Injured some fine woman in some dark way,
Last night or yesterday?

“Let the owner come and claim possession,
No questions will be asked. But stroke her gently
With loving words, and she will evidently
Resume her full soft-jaired white-breasted fashion
And her right home and her right passion.”

JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

HISTORY

WHEN Xerxes beat the sea with rods
Till bridge and sea were reconciled,
What woman out of all his train
Took note of the event, and smiled,
And pondered in her heart of hearts,
“The Emperor of Asia—this?”—
Then gathered Xerxes in her arms,
Uncertain if to shake—or kiss.

DOROTHY E. REID.

THREE

WE, sitting here together and yet apart;
The one of us with keen eyes and chin, watching;
The other one of us smiling across to his girl;
And I dreaming
Dark subtle high dreams of when

We sat thus in Babylon, or maybe in Erech,
And one of us watched eagerly, hawk-nose a-quiver,
The tumbler do that difficult trick;
The other (our host) smiling across
To the naked babyish little concubine dancing;
And I dreaming
That all the pearls of the Gulf
Grew on the tips of her toes.

JOHN E. REINECKE.

THE CAT

PLEASURES, that I most enviously sense,
Pass in long ripples down her flanks and stir
The plume that is her tail. She deigns to purr
And take caresses. But her paws would tense
To flashing weapons at the least offense.
Humbly, I bend to stroke her silken fur.
I am content to be a slave to her.
I am enchanted by her insolence.

No one of all the women I have known
Has been so beautiful, or proud, or wise
As this Angora with her amber eyes.
She makes her chosen cushion seem a throne,
And wears the same voluptuous, slow smile
She wore when she was worshiped by the Nile.

WALTER ADOLPHE ROBERTS.

SUBURBAN DAWN

NOTHING is paler than suburban dawn;
Nothing in mountain forests have I seen
More shyly tranquil than the dappled fawn
Of daybreak crossing squares of dusty green.
Dawn is a white doe pasturing between
The hedge and house, the sidewalk and the lawn,
Cropping the berried bush of darkness clean
While all the curtains in the town are drawn.

Over the pavement lean the dreaming trees
With lashes of their drowsy leaves turned down;
Brown ivy-sparrows tune their morning glees;
The day is trying on her newest gown—
And dons it quickly, hearing on the breeze
The whistle of the first train into town.

HENRY MORTON ROBINSON.

ON THE LAKE

A CANDLE lit in darkness of black waters,
A candle set in the drifting prow of a boat,
And every tree to itself a separate shape,
Now plummy, now an arch; tossed trees
Still and dishevelled; dishevelled with past growth,
Forgotten storms; left tufted, tortured, sky-rent,
Even now in stillness; stillness on the lake,
Black, reflections pooled, black mirror
Pooling a litten candle, taper of fire;
Pooling the sky, double transparency
Of sky in water, double elements,
Lying like lovers, light above, below,
Taking, from one another, light; a gleaming,
A glow reflected, fathoms deep, leagues high,
Two distances meeting at a film of surface
Thin as a membrane, sheet of surface, fine
Smooth steel; two separates, height and depth,
Able to touch, giving to one another
All their profundity, all their accidents,
—Changeable mood of clouds, permanent stars,—
Like thoughts in the mind hanging a long way
off,
Revealed between lovers, friends. Peer in the water
Over the boat's edge; seek the sky's night-heart;
Are they near, are they far, those clouds, those
stars
Given, reflected, pooled? are they so close
For a hand to clasp, to lift them, feel their shape,

Explore their reality, take a rough possession?
Oh no! too delicate, too shy for handling,
They tilt at a touch, quiver to other shapes,
Dance away, change, are lost, drowned, scared;
Hands break the mirror, speech's crudity
The surmise, the divining;
Such things so deeply held, so lightly held,
Subtile, imponderable, as stars in water
Or thoughts in another's thoughts.
Are they near, are they far, those stars, that
 knowledge?
Deep? shallow? solid? rare? The boat drifts on,
And the litten candle single in the prow,
The small, immediate candle in the prow,
Burns brighter in the water than any star.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST.

ALL-SOULS' DAY

CLOSE-WRAPPED in living thought I stand
Where death and daybreak divide the land,
Death and daybreak on either hand
For exit and for entry;
While shapes like wind-blown shadows pass,
Lost and lamenting, "Alas, alas,
This body is only shrivelling grass,
And the soul a starlit sentry
Who guards, and as he comes and goes,
Points now to daybreak's burning rose,
And now toward worldhood's charnel close
Leans with regretless warning". . .

I hear them thus—O thus I hear
My doomed companions crowding near,
Until my faith, absolved from fear,
Sings out into the morning,
And tells them how we travel far,
From life to life, from star to star;
Exult, unknowing what we are;
And quell the obscene derision
Of demon-haunters in our heart
Who work for worms and have no part
In Thee, O ultimate power who art
Our victory and our vision.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON.

RISIN'

Songs of the Kingdom of Fife

As I gaed wi' a cloudit hert, frae the clouds abune
Nae star keeked oot but juist the mad face of the
mune.

Lang was my road, an' ilka fit forrit a fecht,
An' the weicht o' my hert was like the hale world's
weicht.

Syne hame, an' a sleep sae soun' that I didna ken
What seraph liftit my load; but the burden's gane,

An' the gowden cup o' the morn's rinnin ower as
I rise
Winderin' whether or no I'm in Paradise,

Whether thon's the auld face o' the sun lookin'
ower the heicht
Or the glory man's e'e hasna seen, the undeein'
licht.

Am I done wi' my body? . . . Ae thocht winna
gang frae my heid—
Juist as I'm risin' this mornin' men rise frae the
deid.

THOMAS SHARP.

RE-WOVEN

EVER so long ago,
Under a purple awning,
Beside the slow gurgle of a fountain
In a white-hot courtyard,
Solomon spoke of the fact to Sheba—
But it was true before that—
There is nothing new under the sun.

Ever so long ago,
We ran out of thread
For the tapestry we are all weaving.
And we learned how to ravel it out
And weave it all over again
Into another picture . . .

When the late spring rains
Are touching the Pueblo of Isleta
And the locusts are heavy with flowers,
And the beautiful Tewa women,
With a delicate memory of the East in their tranquil faces,
And with long strings of silver dollars hung on red calico dresses,
Are singing in Latin for the feast of Saint Augustine,
To the sure rhythm of a rattle
Made from the shell of a painted turtle.

And within the white adobe walls of Isleta,
Where the air is fragrant with the smell of new
rain on trodden earth,
And bright with the moving of eagle feathers,
The Tewa men
Dance fervently before the chapel,
With white lace surplices
Tucked into blue flannel chaparajos.

Ever so long ago,
Under a purple awning,
Solomon spoke. . . .

DOROTHY STOTT SHAW.

FUNERAL

WHILE I was waiting for the neighbor folk
I went down through the orchard, where in rows
There stood the last few dying apple trees—
The Willow Twigs, the Wealthys and the Snows.

And I remembered how he used to say,
When first he spaded up the hillside loam:
“This land is rough and just a trifle thin
But with some maples it will look like home.”

I saw his wood-pile and his chopping block—
(He always split his stovewood straight and neat.)
I walked back where his blue-grass pasture spread
And stopped to see his field of winter wheat.

His barn was empty—they had turned his team
Out in the corn-stalks and the harness hung
Right there upon the pegs and near the shed
There lay a neck-yoke by his wagon tongue.

I went inside the house—the preacher talked—
He did his best but these young chaps don't know
Just what to say about a man who came
To plant the groves and fruit-trees, years ago.

JAY G. SIGMUND.

INDIANS!

(*Deerfield Memorial Hall*)

DULCIMER, play me a little tune—

*Mercy, died at the age of two,
Read the tablets, and find her name,
"Killed on the door-stone," does it say?
(Whimpered once as the Redskin came),
I remember the winter day.
What shall I play?*

Dulcimer, play me a dancing tune—

*David trod them merrily,
"Died on the Meadows," as settlers die,
(You passed the meadows, piled with hay),
And never a curl to know him by;
Jig or reel, or a minuet?
What shall I play?*

Dulcimer, play me a song of love—

*Hannah Sheldon, thirty-nine,
Died like a woman beside her man,
There's the door where they hacked their way,
Back in the days of good Queen Anne;
Bullets or scalps, or a ransom to pay.
What shall I play?*

Dulcimer, dulcimer, play no more!
Or tell me a tune of wedding-bells—

*Eunice, Joanna, little ones,
"Redeemed," at last, but they chose to stay,
Married their savages, bore them sons,
Happily prayed as Redskins pray—*

Ancient dulcimer, dusty old friend,
Praise be for the story's end!

LEONORA SPEYER.

ANARCHY

IN the dark, in bed, the brows of lovers will touch
Closely, with nothing at all between bone and bone,
Coffer against coffer of mind, and they will not
move.

Silent they'll be, their hearts overflowing with love,
Or sometimes kiss and whisper, or sweetly moan.
Yet silent or whispering, lying two lovers alone,
Locked from the world in the dark, they are separate still,

An impassable gulf between, across which they call
Like voice to voice from shores of a lightless sea.

A moment, surrendered in climax of ecstasy
Only aware of souls' and bodies' kiss
They may burn with the wordless knowledge of
mutual bliss,

Completeness of giving; yet the flush of fever goes,
And its flame dies; and gateways noiseless close,
And behind are wings again, and lonely flight,
The cold swift mathematical movement of thought,
Or wandering memory straying like a moth in the
night.

Thus lovers, and by day
Of all they think, how little the dearest can say.
Even those most pure and devoted must daily wage
The wars of love and the sweet diplomacies
Where self will plot for its ends in a fair disguise,
Or yield to love, for the sake of love, with seeming.

And coldness they sometimes know and even rage
Remorsefully checked, and days divorced when the
 dreaming
Of obscured and oblivious love is forgotten; and
 scheming
And striving in the world the ego fights for its own.
And neglect of love may bring of lovers the best
To a place where a careless petulant word expressed
May open before their feet a gulf of dread
In whose depths is the dreadful image of love lying
 dead,
And they shrink from a lonely life without ever a
 friend. . . .

Though they love and would die for each other; and
 will to the end.

Thus these most close and dear,
Even these with whom the pitiful heart has been
 bared
In its weakness, and shame's most intimate secrets
 shared,
(Though candour's utter prostration could never
 disclose
The whole of that secret world that so quickly
 grows).
And of others how little we know, that we know for
 true,
The strangers we call our friends; we see what they
 do

For an hour a day may be, and hear what they
think

For an hour a year; and ever we stand on the brink
Of rash disclosure; and ever in fear we shrink
With a friendly smile lest dreadfully there should be
A stripping of enmity's naked roots, or afraid
In all our friendship's complicate web to see
A fabric of exploitation or trust betrayed. . . .

A conventional waiving of self as we talk, a pretence
That the caverns of self are not there, a thick wall
of defence

From acquaintance, yet ever there glowers the un-
sleeping within.

And, beyond, each one has a world of foes; each
man

Will anger to blood against person and class and
clan,

Swayed by suspicion, and fear and hate and lust,
And conflict of loves that is ever the most unjust.
And out on the verge of the world are the tribes of
sin

Whose good is our evil, whose alien instincts show
In their eyes, deep secular thoughts that we never
could know.

A chequered tempestuous world where the watcher
sees

Men coveting, fighting and dying, an endless strife
In ignorant fever for power and pride and life:
The destined prey of the hosts of desire and disease.

Yet sighs the absurd unreasoning voice of our
blood
For a world, alas!—and there is no bitter cold
there,
Nor scorching heat, nor blossom with worm in the
bud,
And babes do not die, nor blindness comes to the
old there,
But the sun shines fair, and the rain falls soft, and
the clime
Conspires with the seed for the loveliest fruits of
time,
And the young are strong, and the old go green to
the grave
Without pain, and none is master and none is slave.
And music sounds from the boats, and garlands are
woven
By maids at noon, and great calm statues are cloven
Out of the cliffs, by the shrines of sunnier gods.

Divine, magnificent spirit of man that will face
Invincible ever the battle with hopeless odds
And cannot but dream ere he falls of a time and
a race,
Of a day when the world of men maturer grown
Will live without law in perfect wisdom and grace
Like the solar system hanging in awful space,
Its parts sustained serenely by love alone!

J. C. SQUIRE.

NIGHT ECSTASY

ENOUGH for me
To steal down in the night and see
The home that holds my love,
Now with a flickering of stars above;
The banded Pleiades,
Orion thrusting a shoulder above the trees,
Planting his feet on bare elm boughs
That touch my loved one's window, till over her
house
He climbs on high; and all the stars declare
An ancient Wisdom everywhere
Working upon a vast design,—
Unknown?—nay, clearly known to me
When in the silent night I see
How, climbing up her long ancestral line,
The Spirit shines on high in this fair love of mine.

O thought that blinds and stuns!—
Not being born in a day
Of star-dust and of winds at random play,
Her beauty, rooted in most distant suns,
With helium and uranium, runs
Back to primeval night,
Back to the spear-thrust of emerging light
When out of abysmal glooms
Fire flowered in huge fronds and fans and plumes,
And chaos rolling angry eyes
Saw order dawning in disordered skies,

While storms of purple, red and yellow hues
Drew to a point in contemplative blues:
For God was weaving the floating mesh
Of worlds,—bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh.

Now chaos in complete
Subjection at her feet
Lies conquered; yellow now
Builds a triumphal arch above her brow,
And in the sun-rise of her face
All colours straitly take their place
As courtiers, bearing due
Obedience to her eyes' clear contemplative blue.

Enough for me
Looking far down the depth of life to see
In Him who dwells at mind's eternal noon,
Thinking a sun, and out of a sun a moon,—
There, more than moon or sun, she hath a part
Deep in the Spirit of supreme control,
Who is the heart of my belovèd's heart,
Soul of her soul.

But he hath many an aeon striven
To lift dull earth up nearer heaven,
Striven, too well I know,
Mid lamentation, pain and woe,
And I have thought the while,
Hath it not been in vain,
The labour and the pain?

I think of her and smile,—
No; not in vain!
Though blundering forms with tooth and claw
Blindly rebelled against the angelic law,
Behold, the long obscured design
Stands out and shines in this fair love of mine,
And all the labour and the blindness
Find their atonement in her loving-kindness.

Faith, be not terrified,
Though earth be small and heaven be wide,
Let suns and moons be multiplied
Foam of ethereal seas;
We need not bow to these.
Surely it were more wise,
Kneeling before her face,
To own within her eyes
Lights of a holy place,
Love in her heart, truth in her mind,
A spirit more than the heavens unconfined:
Here the high secret dwells, not in unmeaning space.
Then strip away the bands that bind
Thine eyes, look up and find,
Though sojourners we are
Upon a smaller star
Whirling around no giant sun,
How well God used a little one
Of all his worlds, whereon to prove
The worth of beauty and the beauty of love.

Enough for me
With inward eye to see
Throughout His vast estate
What is accounted great,
And what accounted small;
To see Arcturus blind as fate,
Sirius singeing the cobalt wall;
Yet boasting only girth and weight,
How are they either great or small?
She, to the inward eye, outshines,
Yea, and outlives, the Zodiac signs;
By love and wisdom and foreseeing
She transcends them in her being,
Where spirit lives to Spirit, one with the All-in-all.

W. FORCE STEAD.

AWAKENING

I THOUGHT: The white dawn breaks
Into another day for our delight;
From our warm blood love blossoms into white
Frail radiance. But then the sky's dark brood
Bred on the wild peaks westward covered up
The light, swept over mountain top,
And the storm shakes
The wakened mind out of its certitude.

Only a tired kiss in the ruffled gloom
Remains of all that harvest of the heart
Beating between white sheets in that small room
Upon your breast, but, O love, depths apart.

H. STUART.

MOUNTAIN WATER

You have taken a drink from a wild fountain
Early in the year;
There is nowhere to go from the top of a mountain
But down, my dear;
And the springs that flow on the floor of the valley
Will never seem fresh or clear
For thinking of the glitter of the mountain water
In the feathery green of the year.

SARA TEASDALE.

TO MY SUB-LIMINAL SELF

How came we thus together?
Dark Spirit housed in me!
Bound by what fatal tether
Closer than claw to feather,
Or flower to honey-bee?

Thou wak'st when I am sleeping,
Ousting me from my throne,
My past lies in thy keeping,
I spend long hours in reaping
The tares that thou hast sown.

A sage that oft will blunder,
A saint that stoops to shame,
In all thy ways a wonder,
Thou rendest life asunder,
And I must bear the blame.

When I am tuned to sadness,
Thou unabashed wilt play,
But in thy ribald gladness
Confusion lives, and madness
Is never far away.

Wilt thou be standing by me,
In Heaven's all-judging day,
Pleading with them that try me,
Or wilt thou then deny me,
And go thy separate way?

T. THORNELY.

“BROTHER”

I DO not think the rearing of her brood
Caused Effie much anxiety, although
Their food meant endless labor at the tubs.
Brother was eldest of the noisy tribe,
Swarming about her like so many flies,
To which each passing year contributed
Another.

“Effie,” asked a patron once,
“How can it be that all your children are
A different color?”

“My Gawd, honey,
Dey got a right, for evy one of dem
Is got a diffrent paw!” And then she said,
“Dey worries at me so dat if it warn’t
I fears de law, I’d sholy cut de thoats
Of evy one of dem!”

The visitor

In scandalized amusement quoted this
Above the teacups late that afternoon,
And there was laughter, and the rustling sound
Of costly garments stirred by winds of mirth,
And a sweet voice cried,

“Oh, how terrible!
But aren’t they funny?”

Still, it must be said
For Effie that her children never lacked
For food, and that she fed them by her toil.
Brother’s complexion took that festive shade

Known as "high yellow." He was short and thin,
But strong, and of an agile wiriness.
There was a school to which he might have gone,
But he did not, and no one cared.

"It made

No difference."

That is one view of it.

As he grew up he learned to cut the grass
On the green lawns up town, and pull the weeds
Out of the flower beds, and carry coal,
And be of service in a score of ways.
Flowers he loved, and so they grew for him
In sandy places, and in shady spots
Where people said no flowers could ever thrive.
One sweltering summer when a parching drought
Threatened the growing friends he loved so well,
He carried water for them tirelessly.
"Seem lak dey look, en ax me fer a drink!"
He said, in explanation of his toil.
Children, and music too, he loved.

Now there

Are men who walk respected through this world,
With no loves in their hearts as pure as these.

Brother had other talents. Deference
Was paid him for his knowledge of the "bones,"
And all their chance peculiarities.
"Brother kin sho *talk* to dem bones!" they said
Of him in dusky circles where he moved.
Also he knew that grim commodity

Which those who traffic in such wares call "snow,"
But in no wise resembling God's own snow
Except in color.

Then the bootleggers
Found Brother useful too, for he was small,
And very quick, and best of all, he knew
How to "Lie low, and keep his mouth shut."

"If

You want the *real* stuff, that yellow boy
The darkies all call 'Brother,' is the man
For you to see."

But on one winter night
Things did not go so well. Some one had squealed,
And the police were there. There was a brawl,
Shouts in the dark, and running feet, and shots,—
Confusion vast and terrible to one
Whose sole reaction to authority
Was fear of punishment, and Brother found
Escape cut off, and foes on every side.
Driven and desperate, he pulled a knife,
And stabbed a young policeman to his death.

They tried him early in a blustering March,
Convicted him and sentenced him to die.

Effie was there, and heard the sentence read.
She wailed, and called on God to help her son,
And then went home, and drowned her woes in gin.

One April morning when the air was soft,

And throbbing with birds' cries, just as the sun
Appeared, a sinister procession formed
Within gray prison walls. Two guards in front,
And then a sad faced chaplain reading prayers,
And then the prison doctor, and behind,
Two wardens with a small and shrunken form
Between them.

To a dirty ashen shade
Had the "high yellow" faded, and the step,
So quick in kindness, and so light in sin,
Grown slow and heavy, but the march went on.

No sound from Brother but his shuffling feet. . . .
Some strange paralysis compact of fear
And vague incomprehension of the swift
Crime, and swifter punishment which brought
This retribution on him, who had not
In all his life wished harm to any man,
Held his tongue silent, and no one can tell
What waves of surging memories there beat
Upon his dull half-savage consciousness . . .
His mother's face, perhaps, above the tubs;
The low-voiced, furtive man who sold him "snow";
The flowers that he watered, and the child,
"Miss Annie's baby," who had loved to walk
Prattling, beside him while he cut the grass;
A soft breast in the dark, the smell of musk,
And all the swift excitement of the flesh;
The friendly gentleman who sent him for
The whiskey; or the church choir where he sang

In proper dignity on Sunday night . . .
Phantasmagoric snatches of a life
Cursed to this end before it was begun.

With still no sound, the path to death he walked,
But at the end a seat had been prepared,
A seat whose ghastly comfort roused him from
His lethargy, for just before the last
Strap was adjusted, thrilled a broken voice . . .
"Oh Marse Jesus, oh please suh, forgive me!
Oh Marse Jesus, please suh, Oh Marse Jesus" . . .

The slight form strained and slackened, strained
again . . .
Brother had paid, with Christ's name on his lips.

VIRGINIA LYNE TUNSTALL.

GULLS

THE sun was shining so upon the river,
That scattered ice-floes, swaying on the water,
Seemed winter-lilies, opened and inviting
Gulls to their slumber.

But gulls were circling in a nervous pattern,
Impelled by something other than the morning,
Searching with darting eye and balanced pinion,
Wanting no Lethe.

JEAN STARR UNTERMAYER.

APOCRYPHAL SOLILOQUIES

Goliath:

SEE the dazzled stripling stand,
Naked as an empty hand—
And here am I, a clanking mass
Blotting out the yellow grass
With a body only sent
For the world's astonishment:
Arms as great as monstrous boughs
Where no bird would dare to house,
Fingers like some poisonous growth
Even jungle-beasts must loathe,
And a goggling head awry
Like a black moon in the sky. . . .
Here I wait, uneagerly
For the child that faces me,
Frightened by my length of limb—
And the clean, young grace of him
Unaware that cheek and brow
Taste their last of sunlight now.
Oh, that it were I, not he!
Oh, that God would take from me
This power only schooled in harm
And send it through that puny arm
With such a fire that it might well
Break through this hugely rotting shell. . . .
But there will be no miracle.
There is no help. Young David, fly!

I am destruction's demon, aye,
Too sick to live, too strong to die.

David:

And there he looms, no more defiant
Than any hill. So that's a giant!
This is the thing that should alarm me
More than the sight of hell's own army
Commanded by its master devil.
But this—why this is nothing evil!
Its eyes are cow's eyes, it looks civil,
A thing that only babes could fear. . . .
But I—what am I doing here?
What part have I, the least of shepherds,
Among these hungry spears and scabbards?
What! Have I tended sheep and cattle
Only to lead the wolves to battle?
Am I possessed of howling demons
That I should seek the blood of humans?
God, take this madness out of me.
Give me my pastures, let me be—
Far from this clash of words and weapons—
Where nothing cries and little happens
Save when a star leaps from the heavens
Or a new rush of song enlivens
The heart that beats in balanced measures,
Unshaken by more passionate seizures.
See, I will fling this silly pebble
High in the air and end my trouble

And pluck harp-strings again till they
Charm every darker thought away. . . .
Come, old Goliath, come and play!

LOUIS UNTERMAYER.

RECOVERY

THERE must be many days without a storm,
And many peaceful nights, before this tree
Can be itself again. The branches hang
In order now; the leaves are very still—
But the wind upturned and tore them yesterday,
And all they held was poured into the rain.
The tree is empty now as an old bell
Suddenly swung. . . . The darkness gathered here
Was filled with silent movement, of the shapes
That never speak. Each bird that fluttered through
Hung up an echoing wing-beat, like a leaf.
The gentle winds that hourly wandered in
Made hesitating music, never lost,
Nor ever heard by any but the nights
That folded round the days and darkened them—
All sleeping till the tempest burst about. . . .
The tree has not lamented what is gone.
Time, and the open air, and the quiet ground
Already work together with the wrens
And noiseless, climbing spiders. They collect
New treasure now, sufficient for a while.

MARK VAN DOREN.

CLOUDS BY NIGHT

THEY pile and scatter in the empty air; they go and
come again.

The countryman in a lonely place leans on his staff
and looks,

And does not know that he himself is a thing of like
stuff

With these forever changing forms that drift across
the stars and moon.

BY KUO CH'EN (twelfth century).

Translated by ARTHUR WALEY.

FRIENDSHIP'S END

AND if I cannot give my body to you
Who need not lack for minions of desire,
Cannot again, as you would have me do,
At seeing flame, leap down into the fire,
Am I then nothing to your lonely mind,
Having denied this balm unto your flesh?
Lost to your eager seeking since you find
Me somehow freer of the carnal mesh?

So this is how it is with woman then:
She has no gift except herself to give,
Her mind is but a mockery to men,
Her necessary soul too sensitive.
Even as the tree so must the shadow bend:
Denial or compliance, friendship's end!

EDA LOU WALTON.

EVENING: THE MOTORS

REMORSELESSLY the evening motors pass
Bearing men home down streets where there will be
Doorways and windows where behind the glass
Are lights, and faces that have eyes to see,
Seeing but nothing, ears to hear that hear
Nothing, red lips to cry out that cry not
But speak, speaking quickly, for the fear
Of seeing shadows that they have forgot.

The evening motors pass bearing you home
To words and silence, food, tobacco, sleep—
To sleep, the dark wherein you all are piled,
Poor fragments of the day, until there come
Dreams to release from the troubled heart and deep
The pageantry of thoughts unreconciled.

ROBERT PENN WARREN.

LANDSCAPE WITH RUINS

I

A MILE from where I stand
Beech-trees grow steeply by a pool
Where nets are drawn to the land,
And where the full
Tide breasts the trout-stream and flows down again
By rushy promontories: upon the shore
Out of sea-rocks rude chieftains of the plain
Have built themselves a tower.

II

A stone's throw and the gentler earth had given
A glebe beside the waves
To brown Franciscans; many a soul in heaven
Once knew these graves,
And counted dearer no known sanctuary
Than the grey house they fashioned by this bay.

III

So it was then; and then the Stranger came,
And for a space
These stones still held the pride of an old name
And of that ancient race,
And craftsmen set to work with hands less rude
Than those of old in granite and in wood,
And for a time it seemed as though the past
Had found new strength to last.

IV

But never Stranger from beyond the seas
 Could value right
 All that had been, or share those memories
 That once had given delight
 To monks that penned them, or to bards that sang
 In the high tower—the river's clamour drown'd
 Until no other sound
 Rose but the song with which the rafters rang.

V

Nothing, it seems, beneath the constant sun
 But has its natural declension,
 Nor ever can Promethean fire and sword
 Serve but a rightful lord,
 And not be uppermost. Yet who had dreamt,
 Who knew the earth whence sprang so strong a sap,
 That the oak's summer had so soon been spent,
 Or prophesied mishap
 Or such calamity that a later age
 Would find a ruin for its heritage?

VI

Now that so many here have found a grave,
 I would that memory
 Were laid down likewise, where the sounding wave
 Alone might dree
 Old grief, and keep fit company with ghosts.
 Bitterness in the heart out of the past

Were ivy to the oak-tree, and the blast
Knows well how deep that amorous traitor thrusts.

VII

So when Spring draws her swallows to the tower,
And where the old have gone
New corbels nest, her spirit should have power
On men who gaze upon
Such handiwork, that the birds' cunning might
Set chisel to the stone with fresh delight.

VIII

And all seems natural: that no other house
But such as the mind's dignity had planned
Should rise above the windy beechen boughs,
Nor labour of the hand
Be spent on baseness, nor be fashioned aught
That had not given pleasure to fine thought.

IX

The tide has set; along the rocky shore
A fisher wades knee-deep, and eddying
His cast swirls seaward. Somewhere dips an oar
Down the still reaches where the evening
Leads home to islands; by the monks' low wall
A heron stands stone still, and distantly
Out of the darkness comes the incessant call
Of gannets striking on a shoal at sea.

R. N. D. WILSON.

DEATH'S HERITAGE

ALL men are heirs to riches. They inherit
A vast estate the day that they draw breath.
They by the right of Eve, and Adam's merit,
Assume the feudal policies of death.
Their actions wear his livery. Their thought
Is the tradition of his seigneurie.
Their dreams are heirlooms, and their love is
naught
But whispers and his fleeting memory.
But some refuse their heritage. These owe
Dangerous fealty to life the lord
That lights them home by ways death does not know
To Eden by the flashes of his sword—
The poets from the riches of the dead
Magnificently disinherited.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

THE UNCOMMON WOMAN

I LEAN back through the dark forest of my race,
and all the floor is heaped with delicate ash
of leaf and blossom, and husk too small to trace—
all that is left of man's imperious flesh,
 made manifest
in battle, love, and the journey to the Islands of the
West.

Not his these scented ashes, this bland air,
but Nature's only, muttering in her sleep
"let life go on!" and does not know, nor care,
if all who live are foundered fathoms deep,
 like sinking wrack
changing from gold to green, from green to un-
imagined black.

Old wars—the desperate bid for life by dying—
mix with dust-Edens long ago forgotten,
and here Gethsemanes in ash are lying
browner than last year's leaves, as those leaves
rotten,
 all nature's tricks—
even the last sweet treachery of a Crucifix.

But woman has a secret that resists
the magic of the half-gods, as they wind
their spells with slow, but surely wearying, wrists,

woman has a secret not all their webs can bind—
the little Powers
weaving for their own little necks these sacrificial
flowers.

What is our secret, Eve? When the coiled snake
tempts us with knowledge, and we whisper "Yes"?
What is our secret, Mary? When they take
our dream and crucify it? And no less
we must outdream
the serpent-trick of knowledge, and man's blind
stratagem?

What is the secret of women, that jettison
the Edens that they have for spectral gleams
of impossible Edens always further on?
Who offer up the child Jesus of their dreams
to the sharp nails,
that hammer into Hell the broken dream that fails?

What is their secret? Woman is older than man,
and is not cheated by the manifold pretence
of life that has no purpose and no plan,
wooing with spring, and flowers, and trees the sense
of those, who should
look into darkness in cold undecorated solitude.

Woman, that bears, has a higher fate than bearing.
Woman, that gives, outlasts both giving and taking.

Woman, that loves, outloves the need of caring.
Woman, that dies, is moulding death, forsaking
 life's fleeting guesses
for the rich dark, and sempiternal lovelinesses.

She is the labyrinth that man has trod
led by the tapes of love the cozener,
who in that guidance dreams himself a god,
and does not guess that in the heart of her
 he is no more
than, gazing over seas unknown, the Minotaur.

She is the constant in the bewildering flow
of numbers, written in chalk on death's long slate,
to which death has the key, but does not know
how that one figure, stronger far than fate
 will crash the sum
in the gold total of her proud Kingdom Come.

And the Uncommon Woman, whatever shape
man's wandering fancy gives her, Ashtaroth,
Psyche, or Eve or Mary, cannot escape
from that in men and women, transcending both—
 the primal trust,
to which she is appointed, of the patient dust—

twisted and battered, suffering and torn,
but clamouring ever through its shapeless mouth
for sheerer peaks than thought's last Matterhorn,

for swallow-flights past beauty's furthest South,
 for that which must
be the whole meaning of dust, because it is not dust.

To that all women are pledged, and do not know it,
And I, the uncommon woman, who dimly see
that we are the first conjecture of a poet,
one line in an unconcerted harmony,

I will not falter
myself the flame, I shall not see, upon the unseen
altar.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

SONNET

WHAT is a poet but a tiny flaw
Within the massive silent wall of things?
A trickle of thin beauty, misty law,
Escaped from their majestic prisonings?
Harmonies heaven-swelling, wherein we dwell,
Can only seep, a lessening, broken stream,
As dim as ocean-echoes in a shell,
As faint as an almost forgotten dream.
We are dumb enough, God knows; but life is
dumber,
Only the rare dull echo of sweet noise,
A desert of winter, with an hour of summer,
A desert of pain, with a far cloud of joys
Mocking our bitter thirst. Then sing, faint
breath,
Though nothing heed you but the ears of death.

CLEMENT WOOD.

A COURTESY

HAVING conceived that this delight alone
Must be the corner stone
For all my building; having stripped it bare
Of you and found it fair;
Having accepted deprivation;
I have knelt down to bow
My brow upon the brow
Of granite; I have filled my empty hand
With running pulse of sand,
And twined my fingers in a bough of leaves;
I have pushed back my sleeves
To let the water twist
Its coolness round my wrist,
And I have kissed the comfortable moss
For cushioning a cross
Of racking timber sharp as childbirth bed;
I have embraced instead
Of love, a ponderable cloud of rain.

Let us return again
Together; let us kneel upon the grass
In quiet clear as glass,
Bending stiff necks and crooking stubborn knees
In courteous obsequies
For that poor wolf, but late mistitled Pride;

Let us be thankful that this beast has died,

And thankful for the silence of the trees,
As I was thankful for the cheer I had
To hear their chattering when I was sad.

ELINOR WYLIE.

THE STAR

I SAW a star shine in bare trees
That stood in their dark effigies;
With voice so clear and close it sang
That like a bird it seemed to hang
Within the branches, not behind,
Twigs on its rosy breast outlined.

A star of such bright amplitude
It followed with me through the wood;
All other stars before its sphere
Pale as their own reflections were;
The Plough, by pebbly fallow spurned,
High in the sky lay overturned.

An obvious moon halving the night
And haloed by a rainbow light
Sounded as clear as silver bell;
The trees in flight before it fell,
Their shadows straggling on the road
Where glacier of soft moonlight flowed.

But moon nor star-untidy sky
Could catch my eye as that star's eye;
For still I looked at that same star,
That fitful, fiery Lucifer,
Watching with mind as quiet as moss
Its light nailed on a burning cross.

A. J. YOUNG.

FROM "GYPSY NIGHTS"

I

EVERY night of last week was a Gypsy:
Two were old, tired hags, dressed in black;
Three had saved a crescent earring;
One was a cool child;
And the last
Was a young, lithe woman.

If she bewitched me
It was because I followed her
Through twisted tree-branches,
And if I am mad
Madness is what I sought.

JAKE ZEITLIN.

APPENDIX

I HAVE often been asked if this book has nothing to correspond to the asterisk and roll of honour system used by Mr. Edward O'Brien in his Best Short Story annuals. It has always seemed to me that if I could not include a poem in the book any further opinion on it was 'unnecessary, if not an impertinence: and so hitherto I have refused to attempt anything of the kind.

It has been made clear to me from so many sources, however, that some mention of poems not included would be an addition to the usefulness of the book, that I append a brief list below. Needless to say it by no means includes all the poems I should have wished to commend, and makes no claim to be systematic or final.

Among the many poems, other than those included, which I read with particular pleasure and interest, were:—

Fire Dancers of the Moon. OLIVER S. ARATA.
(*Open Court*, May, 1926.)

Sword Prayer. MACKNIGHT BLACK. (*Poetry*,
Aug., 1925.)

Travelers. STANTON A. COBLENTZ. (*New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1925.)

- The Moulder. GEORGE ENGELHARDT. (*American Art Student*.)
- The Undertaker. LEONARD FEENEY. (*America*.)
- Tenement Pictures. CAROL HAYNES. (*Scribner's*, Dec., 1925.)
- Sonnet Sequence. HOWARD MUNFORD JONES. (*Lyric*, April, 1926.)
- The Housewife. JESSIE WEBER KITT. (*Gamma-dion*, Spring, 1926.)
- Pirate Men. FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR. (*L'-Alouette*, Feb., 1926.)
- To My Sister. JAMES MCALPINE. (*New York Sun*, May 29, 1926.)
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